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The Popular Magazine

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OUT AUG. 25, 1910

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MONTH-END EDITION

VOLUME XVII NUMBER 5

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

SEPTEMBER 15, 1910

CONTENTS

THE PLACE OF SKELETONS. A Complete Novel, . **Bertrand W. Sinclair** . . 1
Dead men sometimes tell tales, despite the old proverb. Witness this striking tale of a funeral ride through the wild Northwest country that lasted five hundred miles.

THE CAST-OFF. A Short Story, ... **Charles E. Van Loan** . 48
He isn't playing baseball now, but he used to be in the Big League. Here's his eventful history.

LUXURIOUS LOU. A Short Story, ... **Roy Norton** . . . 57
Tim Bryant surprises the boys by bringing a dazzling wife to Willow Creek.

THE OPEN TRAIL. Verse, ... **Berton Braley** . 66

THE PENFOLD ADVENTURE. A Serial Story, . . **Ralph D. Paine** . . . 67
Bringing back the good old times. In a battered old hulk the Penfolds recognize the lineaments of an ancient East Indiaman, and fit her out for another cruise.

A FINE DANCER. A Short Story, ... **Max Marcin** . . . 88
The clothing salesman forgets business and becomes romantic.

THE SMELL OF POWDER. A Short Story, . . . **Jacob Burton Frazier** . 96
The leading citizens of Bullseye make the acquaintance of a young millionaire from New York.

COALS TO NEWCASTLE. A Short Story, . . **Rupert Hughes,** . . 101
Cleopatra gets a pair of wings at last, thanks to the art of Dirk Memling, burglar-sculptor.

NO MAN'S LAND. A Serial Story, ... **Louis Joseph Vance** . . 116
With two heroes to absorb your attention. A dramatic, forceful narrative, with the action laid on a tiny island off the New England coast.

STUNG. A Short Story, ... **George Bronson-Howard** 145
An easy-looking "come-on" has things happen to him in Nome.

QUEERING A CROOKED DEAL. A Novelette, . . **Frank L. Packard** . . 153
The chance encounter of two college men, after the passing of thirteen years, results in a series of strange adventures.

THE CREW OF THE "FLASH." A Short Story, . **Neil Montrose** . . 172
A motor-boat story; picturesque, dramatic, thrilling.

"813." A Serial Story, ... **Maurice Leblanc** . . 179
The curtain falls on the master villain, Arsène Lupin.

A BULLDOG AND CAPTAIN OLSEN. A Short Story, . **Albert Dorrington** . . 202
If you don't believe a dog has intelligence, read this—and smile.

THE VANISHED MAN. A Short Story, . . . **Ross Beeckman** . . 207
A detective story, paralleling a remarkable New York crime.

THE AMERICANS. A Short Story, ... **Morgan Robertson** . 217
The adventures of a so-called "American" crew who embarked on board the little craft "Salmon."

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OCTOBER POPULAR—WESTERN NUMBER—ON SALE SEPTEMBER 10

A Chat With You

HERE is an announcement we have been impatient to make for a long time. In two weeks from to-day we are going to issue a big WESTERN NUMBER. We have been planning for it since early in the year, and we hoped to have issued it before this, but we couldn't have it leave our hands for yours till it was just the way we wanted it from cover to cover. We have it finished now. There isn't a story in it we want to change. There isn't a story that we could take out of it without feeling that we had sacrificed something and spoiled the balance of the magazine. We don't want you to think that every story in the magazine is a Western tale—there are other stories also. But this "Western Number" has the flavor of the West a little more strongly than usual; there's a little more of the outdoors in it, a little more of the gold of the sunset and the spirit of the strong west wind.

NOW just to give you a few details. In the first place there is the initial large installment of Emerson Hough's new serial, which will be completed in about five numbers of the magazine. It is called "The Grapes of Wrath," and is a story of that older Southwest that was new and virgin country before the civil war. You remember Hough's earlier books, "The Mississippi Bubble" and "Fifty-Four-Forty or Fight." This new story is a big American novel with just as much breadth and strength, just as much purpose as either of the others, and with perhaps even more of the quality of interest that holds the attention at its highest pitch. You know without our telling you that Hough's books are among the "best sellers." In actual worth, holding quality, and value they are a great deal stronger than the average "best seller" at its best. "The Grapes of Wrath" is a great, strong romance, with incident and adventure, with hard knocks and excitement, and with something else beside, hard to define but easy to feel when you read the story. This is just one item in our Western Number.

ITEM number two is a novel published in its entirety in the one issue, written by Dane Coolidge. His first book, "Hidden Water," appeared serially in THE POPULAR some months ago, and attracted more attention than any story of the West that we have published in years. "Pecos Dalhart, Rustler," is the title of the new story. When we secured it, it was our intention to run it serially, but we finally decided to hold it and give it to you in one great mouthful in this Western Number. It is a story of the cow country, written with that same strength, realism, and intimate knowledge of the life and the people that made critics sit up and take notice when they read "Hidden Water." Coolidge knows the real people in the West, and he knows how to make them live for us on paper. "Pecos Dalhart, Rustler," is a better story than "Hidden Water." We know that we are saying a good deal in this comparison, but it is a cold fact. In two weeks from now you'll have the best number of THE POPULAR ever issued in your hands, and "Pecos Dalhart, Rustler," belongs in that number.

THERE is another Western story by Frederick R. Bechdolt, some of whose tales you may have noticed in *McClure's, The Saturday Evening Post,* and other magazines. He is new at present to the pages of THE POPULAR, but you are going to become a great deal better acquainted with him in the future. "A Matter of Principle" is something different from the ordinary short story. As a matter of fact, it is actual history told with the skill of a man who knows how to write a good story. Bechdolt didn't have to add anything to the facts or take anything from them; he didn't have to alter a line or a lineament of the actual living characters to make this one of the best short stories of the West we have read in a long time.

SPEAKING of Western numbers, we are sorry that we could not have the first installment of the Western serial B. M. Bower is now working on in next month's issue. There is, however, a short story by that author called "Hawkins" that is as good as any Bower story we have ever published. Then there is another Western story by W. B. M. Ferguson called "The Feudists," as well as a story called "Damon and Pythias," which will show you that C. E. Van Loan knows just as much about cowboys as he does about professional baseball players, and can write about them just as interestingly. To the same number Robert Alexander Wason, who wrote "Happy Hawkins," has contributed a characteristic Western story. Emmet Mixx is represented with a delightful little story, "Those Endearing Young Charms," in which there is human feeling and pathos in a Western setting. There is a stirring, grim tale of the red Indian by Bertrand W. Sinclair. It is called "The Coming and Going of Little Wind," and you will remember it long after you have read it. Then we would also call attention to "Love Lyrics of a Cowboy," by Robert V. Carr, which will appear in the same issue.

PLEASE don't go away with the idea that there isn't any variety in the next issue of THE POPULAR, and that it is all about the West. It isn't. There's Louis Joseph Vance, Ralph D. Paine, Rupert Hughes, Ross Beeckman, Lincoln Colcord, and a good many others to give you all the variety you could wish. It is just about the best number of THE POPULAR we have ever issued, with a special emphasis laid on Western life and color. We have never seen, nor have you, such a collection of splendid Western fiction as we will give you next month bound within the covers of any single magazine anywhere. It took us six months at least to get it together, and we know what we are talking about. But if we didn't have this feature to talk about there are enough other good things in the next POPULAR to make the number a notably good one. For a long time, however, we have been looking toward the sunset and realizing how we and THE POPULAR along with the rest of the U. S. A. were growing in that direction. The West is the young, growing part of the country. Things are more or less static in the East, but there they are still changeful and interesting. There romance is not so hard to find, nor the real man beneath the mask of custom. You'll know when you read the issue out in two weeks from now.

AND just a word in parting. Order your next number *now.* These two pages in which we have our little talks are the last part of the magazine to go to press. The bulk of the next issue is already on the press. We are getting out an edition a great many thousands larger than ever we have published before, but at this writing we are beginning to be afraid there won't be enough to go round. We want *you* to get *your* magazine, so get your order in *now.*

Cover design by H. T. Dunn

A GREAT WESTERN NUMBER!

The FIRST OCTOBER number of

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On all news stands September 10th. **Price, Fifteen Cents**

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XVII. SEPTEMBER 15, 1910. No. 5.

The Place of Skeletons

By Bertrand W. Sinclair

Author of "Pinnacle Bob," "The Land of Frozen Suns," Etc.

Big stories like "The Land of Frozen Suns" and the other Sinclair novels are not the sort that can be written out of hand at a moment's notice. That is why you have not had a long novel by Bertrand Sinclair since March. Here is his newest story, breathing the breath of the free Northwest, vibrant with the passions of conscienceless men, tender in places, full of charm, gripping your interest—and holding it till the curtain falls. We think you will say it was worth waiting six months for.

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

IT may seem a trifle odd to say that such an ordinary accident as cutting my finger with a pocketknife was the prime factor in starting me on a funeral march which lasted five hundred miles, more or less. Nevertheless it follows logically. If I had not gashed my forefinger one day I should not have gone to the telegraph office at Bullhead Junction, and a lot of peculiar and unpleasant things might have lain dormant through all time. For Bullhead was a place I seldom went to, and usually cut my stay short when I did.

I'm not very strong on this narrative business, and in order to make myself clear it may be as well for me to begin at the beginning, and go straight ahead from there. Otherwise I may sound rather disconnected.

I had been up on the Plume a few miles above the railroad looking for a few of my horses which had gotten into that country, and in a hard day's riding had only found one—a saddle horse, running with a bunch that I'd no desire to drive farther than necessary from their own range. So I chased them down to Bullhead and corralled in the stockyards, intending to catch my gelding and lead him home, and let the others go back where they belonged.

Having been out all winter, the black, like most range-bred horses, was as wild as the broom-tailed mares he ran with. When I flipped the loop over his head he tore across the yard like a runaway locomotive, and my lass-rope broke at the hondo with the jerk, when I took my turns on the horn. So I had to stop and tie another hondo. The knifeplay came in when I took my knife to trim up the ragged strands. Between carelessness and a sudden side twist of my mount I jerked the sharp blade slanting over a forefinger.

Of course it was no great wound. But the confounded thing was deep

enough so that it bled persistently. I had no handkerchief in my pockets, and I didn't feel like tearing up the two-dollar silk around my neck. So, recollecting a speaking acquaintance with the operator, I rode to the office a short distance along the track.

The office door was ajar when I walked into the waiting room. Smith, or Jones, or whatever his name was, must, I decided, be in the living apartment to the rear. I pushed open the door and stepped into that part which is usually kept sacred to train crews and special friends of the operator—the place where the sounders clack noisily the whole twenty-four hours through. And I lifted up my voice, just as I would have done in a cow camp, calling the knight of the key to show himself.

But no tired-looking man in shirt sleeves appeared. Instead came a patter of tiny feet, and a tousled yellow head, hardly more than level with the knob, peeped from behind the partly open door. The little maid peered shyly for a moment.

"Who ith you?" she asked diffidently.

I stared. My impression of the operator had been that he was a bachelor. And when I did not answer her question she took a step or two nearer and gravely informed me:

"Mamma ith dittin' some coal."

"Where is your papa, baby?" I found my tongue at length.

A puzzled expression crept over the little round face, and while she considered the problem another step sounded, and a woman emerged from the dull light of the rear. She stopped just within the door, behind the baby, regarding me with some inquiry. I dare say I cut a poor figure standing there, holding my slashed finger with the other hand. I was just a trifle ill at ease. Women had not been a part of my life for so long—I had got into the habit of being shy with them, self-conscious.

"You aren't supposed to come into the office, you know," she reminded me. "Is there a message or anything?"

Her voice was smooth and musical, if I may be permitted that overworked phrase. She was young, twenty-five or thereabout, and round-faced, like the baby. Also the few words and the inflection somehow gave me the impression that she was not just an ordinary woman. There was a cool self-reliance, and a sort of tolerance which a person of breeding might be expected to show toward a boor who had blundered in where he had no business. I took off my hat.

"I beg your pardon," said I. "I thought this was bachelor's hall. I came in to see the operator."

"The operator? Oh, Mr. Curry. He has changed stations," she replied indifferently. "I'm the operator here."

"In that case, perhaps——" I began, for I was not going to let my infernal diffidence drive me off in a panic of self-effacement. A wrapping for my finger was a small matter. But she forestalled me.

"Why, your hand is bleeding!" she exclaimed, and, brushing past the child, came fearlessly up to me.

My hand was bleeding. I had loosed my hold when I removed my hat, and a few drops of blood had spattered the floor.

"It doesn't amount to much," I hastily explained. "That's what brought me here. I didn't know Curry had left, and so when I cut myself over in the corral I thought I'd come here and get a rag of some kind to tie it up."

"Well, you shall," she smiled. "Let me see."

I held out the cut member, and after a look at it she went lightly into the rear room. I heard the rip of cloth, and in a moment she was back with a long band of soft white stuff, a needle, thread, and scissors. Though I made a tentative motion to do the wrapping, she disregarded it and went ahead as if it were a job which I could not be expected to do for myself. The little girl came close and looked on.

"How did you hurt you's finder?" she inquired sympathetically.

Whereupon I found myself launched into a detailed recital of how it happened, for the benefit of the wonder-

ing-eyed little maid. I could not help a twinge of regret when the finger was properly wrapped, for then I had no valid excuse to linger. And though it may be counted a weakness, I was loath to ride away with but a conventional "Thank you."

When, for a span of six or seven years, a man has met and talked to none but weary, worked-to-death women of the ranches, mostly illiterate, faded, and old before their time, it is apt to make his blood run faster to come upon a woman like the one at arm's length from me. Her hands were soft and white. Upon her head glossy brown hair lay twisted in heavy coils. A faint odor of violet perfume recalled certain episodes out of the past, incidents of a life far removed from the crudities of Bullhead Junction, and it gave me a pang of loneliness.

She reminded me of the girls I knew when the cub-man stage was on me, long before I struck the West. But she was different. For all the round, smooth youthfulness of her face, her gray eyes looked out on the world with none of the enthusiasm of youth. Being a man, I can frankly avow that she stirred me more than I relished, just the nearness of her. If I had given way to my impulses I should have leaned over and kissed her then and there. But I knew better than to make a break like that.

The most banal sort of adieu was rising to my lips. In a few seconds I should have bowed and made my exit. But as she snipped the thread at the last stitch and remarked, "There; that should be all right," some signal in the monotonous clacking caught her attention.

"Pardon me a moment," she said, and went to the counter affair, upon which were ranged the instruments and the ordered paraphernalia of telegraphy.

One hand settled on the sending key, and injected a new note in the variety of clicking. Then she sank into her chair, and for a minute or two alternately jotted on a pad and tapped the instrument. Then she shut the key off with a little lever and faced about. I felt that I had best be off—if I wished to come again. And I fully intended to come again. Why should I deny it? Curiously, a thought of her husband never once entered my mind.

"I'm everlastingly obliged for your kindness," I ventured, moving reluctantly toward the door. "My name is Grover—Wash Grover. And you can consider me your debtor."

"Well," she replied slowly, a trace of what I took to be amusement lurking about her mouth, "since you've performed half an introduction, my name is Aldous. As for indebtedness——" She broke off and dismissed that with a little gesture.

"Good-by." I backed out the office door, maybe a bit precipitately. I hadn't the nerve to stand there mouthing commonplaces, and to save my soul I could think of nothing much to say; though I'm not tongue-tied as a rule. "I appreciate it, just the same."

A surreptitious glance as I passed out showed me that milady was not particularly engrossed in my departure, for she sat tapping on the chair arm with a pencil and looking composedly out of the window across the ash-littered tracks. I looked again, however, and she had turned her eyes to my back. The expression on her face was definite amusement.

I wondered if she had, with feminine intuition, read my mind? I know that my face burned at the thought. But none of the confusion which overtook me afflicted her. She met my gaze quite coolly, as if it were a matter of indifference to her whether I saw her watching me or not. And I did not look back again, but stalked around the corner where stood my horse.

I took thought that perhaps I hardly merited much attention from any woman. I was dust from head to heel. A week's growth of a naturally heavy beard encumbered my face. My clothing was of an indifferent sort. As a matter of fact, I had dropped into the range rider's habit of considering myself dressed for any and all occasions if I were but fitted with a good Stetson

hat and twelve-dollar, handmade riding boots, garnished with silver-inlaid spurs. The rest did not matter, so that one wore shirt and trousers, and a more or less clean silk handkerchief about the neck. Not in many moons had I given as much thought to my personal appearance as I did in those few seconds. It is all very well to observe sagely that clothes do not make the man, but slovenly dressing has many a time vitiated an otherwise good impression.

Coming in sight of my mount, there upon the edge of the platform stood little Goldilocks, with her dimpled hands clasped behind her, solemnly eying Buck, who looked at her with all the inbred suspicion a range cayuse has for unfamiliar objects. I had not missed her from the office.

"I tummed out to thee you's hossie," she explained, as I came up, and she seemed not a whit disturbed, but rather pleased, when I hoisted her in my arms. By dint of stealthy approach we got up to Buck, and he was cringingly permitting her to stroke his head, when her mother called:

"Bessie. Oh, Bessie."

With that I heard the hurried trip of her feet on the platform, and I answered: "Here she is."

"Little Turk," she reproached tenderly, when she came up, "you mustn't run away and leave mamma like that."

"Oh, I isn't doan to do 'way an' leave you, mamma," Bessie made earnest protest. "I's dust doan for a wide on a hossie."

She smiled down at the pair of us, tucking in vagrant locks that were flirted loose by a passing breeze, and I proceeded to make my peace with the little one.

"Not on this horsie," I explained. "He's wild. He would jump up in the air, and throw us both down in the dirt. Some day soon I'll come on a nice, tame pony that you can ride. Eh?"

That satisfied her temporarily. I let her stroke Buck's soft mane once more, and then set her upon the platform. With the reins in my hand I stood for a minute rolling a cigarette, while the baby hung to her mother's hand, watching me with her great blue eyes.

The woman's gaze shifted from me and my horse, and rested speculatively upon the scattered huts of Bullhead Junction. Insensibly I followed suit. For the first time, the rawness of the rangeland, the social bleakness of that particular spot struck me. There was Hennesy's general store, with the post office stuck in one corner. Beyond it a squalid hotel, where a few railroad men boarded, and where ranchers ate when they struck Bullhead at mealtime. Back of them, and on either side ranged a few houses, as nondescript as those that dwelt within.

I do not think there were ten women in the town. And all about lay the smooth roll of the plains. Little cow ranches nestled in creek bottoms somewhere in that huge spread, but they could not be seen; and they counted little, for they were peopled with folk of the Bullhead sort.

"I should think," said I, "that you'd find this a most ungodly lonesome place."

"I dare say I shall," she answered simply. "Still, a C. P. R. operator doesn't get time to be very lonesome. I haven't been here long."

"You'll like it less the longer you stay," I prophesied. "There's only two white women in the place besides yourself. One of them is a slandering old gossip, and the other is a deaf mute. The rest are foreigners."

She smiled soberly at that, and I laid hold of my stirrup. As I swung up Goldilocks cried a tearful entreaty:

"Ah wants to do for a wide! Ah wants to do now—wight *n—ow!*"

Her mother stooped and gathered the disappointed, insistent bit of humanity into her arms, and smiled over the little yellow head at me.

"When Bessie wants a thing she wants it badly—like any other child."

"Well," said I, "that may be a childish trait, but I've known plenty of grown-ups afflicted the same way. Anyway, what I said about the gentle pony goes. Miss Goldenhair shall have her ride."

And with that I swung Buck away toward the stockyard. It may have been silly, but I felt elated that I had served her notice of my intention to come again, and she had not seemed to mind.

CHAPTER II.

My next trip to Bullhead Junction was laid out for me a little sooner than I had reckoned. It came, in fact, within forty-eight hours. Up the creek a mile or so from my solitary camp two English remittance men were "rawnching" on a scale about equal to my own; that is, they were possessed of a hundred-odd head of cattle, enough to furnish them a living while they waited for the slow increase of the herd to bring ultimate independence. And one of these boys while playing broncho fighter in an amateur way had a fractious colt fall upon him in such fashion as to break a leg. I, being present at the mix-up, volunteered to deliver a hurry-up order for a physician.

This happened at sundown. The ranch lay in the bottoms of Ross Creek, a good eight miles of tolerably rough country spreading between it and Bullhead to the southwest, and so it was pitch dark of a muggy, rain-threatening night when I swung off my sweaty horse at the rear of the little red depot.

Through the unshaded window which jutted into the platform I could see milady's brown head bent over her key. She looked up at the spur-clanking sound of my approach, but it was an impersonal glance, for I was back in the shadow. Not till I stuck my face in the open ticket window did she turn again, from scrawling on a train-order pad.

"I'm on an errand of mercy this time," I made known, when she gave me a nod and a fleeting smile. "Let me have a telegraph blank, will you, please?"

I wrote the message and handed it in. She read it aloud, counting the words to compute the charge.

J. H. PLANK, M.D., MEDICINE HAT: Roy Jenkins broken leg, Jenkins Ranch, Four Mile Crossing, Ross Creek. Can you come quick? Answer.

"There's no train before two-thirty a. m.," she commented thoughtfully. "How will your doctor get here?"

"Oh, he won't come here," I explained. "He drives a high-stepping team that will take him out there in jig-time. I'm simply wiring from here to get him started as soon as possible."

"I see," she replied. "I'll have to hold it a few minutes—there's a freight pulling in, and they'll have to clear before I'll have any time."

She went back to her work, and I, to pass the time, took to staring out into the heavy night, listening to the growing pur of the wind. A Cyclopean eye, yellow and unwinking, shone over the tracks beyond the station, lit up the platform, and passed, as the freight engine rumbled in and by. The line of cars flicked past, until the grinding squeal of brakes clamped hard brought the lantern-trimmed caboose to a stand before the office windows.

The conductor hurried in, passed through the waiting room and into the office, where he stopped at the desk, exchanging a word with her as he signed for his orders. A brakeman lounged in, edged to the ticket window, and peered through. The conductor, intent upon his business, hurried out, the tissue-thin order sheets fluttering in his hand, reading by the glow of his arm-swung lamp as he walked. He left the office door open in his careless haste. She walked back from the front and shut it. When she resumed her chair the brakeman pushed his head a little farther through the arched opening and spoke:

"Where do we pass Nineteen?"

"At Walsh," she answered, without looking up.

He set down his lantern, leaned his elbows on the narrow ledge, and tried again. I could see him twirling a grimy mustache end and smirking to himself.

"Say, sis, ain't it lonesome as thunder here?" he inquired familiarly.

Now, there was nothing much in the query itself to resent; it was altogether in the tone of him, the obvious attempt to make talk. I suppose the fellow had

"mashed" female operators before. But the girl inside neither answered nor changed countenance in the least degree. She scribbled a moment or two longer, then rose quietly and came to the ticket window, looking at the wall over the brakeman's head.

Before either he or I realized what she meant to do, the narrow, sliding window slammed down in his face—not missing him by too great a margin of safety, I gathered from the backward start he gave. The ground glass effectually shut off his view and all opportunity of speech.

Of course, I had no business to laugh, and equally of course I did laugh, though in a mild inner way. He whirled about and caught the derisive grin on my features. And in the manner of his kind he resented that by ripping out an expletive, and applying to me a tersely descriptive phrase which no cow-puncher takes as a compliment. In brief, he profanely demanded to know what I saw to grin at.

Under the circumstances, from almost any other type of man I should have passed it up. My sense of humor isn't dwarfed by an overweening sense of dignity. But for the genus "brakey" I have a most intense and rancorous dislike, a foolish but nevertheless well-grounded spite against those heavy-handed, more or less capable individuals who go thundering up and down the land aboard transcontinental freight trains.

It dates back to a period when as a raw youngster of twenty I was compelled by the exigencies of circumstance to beat my way across two deserted divisions of the Southern Pacific. I know that the hobo is the trainman's constitutional enemy, but I wasn't the hardened hobo—I was a green kid, in hard luck—and those brakemen gave me a rough deal.

I got over the desert because I had to cross or starve, but I still bear on my body the marks of rock heaving, and coupling pins, and the scars of heavy-toed shoes. Rightly or wrongly, I would rather slug a brakeman than smile at him. And when this freshly snubbed gentleman grabbed up his lantern and swore at me again I stepped in rather more quickly than he expected, and jabbed my fist straight into his scowling face.

He gave ground and swung back his lantern. What with the heavy frame, thick globe, and metal-weighted bottom, it makes a nasty weapon—the like of which had more than once descended upon my head in those stirring days before mentioned. I had not the least intention of having a gash made in my scalp. So I closed with him, and, hooking my fingers in the wire bale, smashed at him with the free hand till he was in a very bad way indeed.

All this transpired in one-two-three order; certainly a few seconds. I had forced him toward the corner farthest from the door, and he let go the lantern to fight back with both fists, when the tide of battle turned for a moment in his favor.

Another of the train crew saw the fuss and rushed in to his fellow's aid. I did not hear him come. My first warning was a punch back of the ear which staggered me for an instant. With that, seeing I had two of them against me, I sidestepped, and drew back the lantern for a blow that would have reduced the odds considerably. The sight of the conductor bearing through the doorway straight for us spurred me to get action any old way—for I had no mind to let a bunch of railroaders clean me up on any pretext whatsoever.

But just as I aimed the lamp the office door flew open, and milady stepped calmly into the fray.

"This isn't a prize ring," she cried. Then, to the conductor: "Stop this, and take your men out of here, or I'll report the lot of you to the superintendent for making a disturbance in the waiting room."

The conductor, who, on general principles, would have backed his crew in their clash with me, thought better of it. And as for the brakemen, the threat of a report that would put them on the carpet before the division autocrat took all the wind out of their sails. Yet

the first man still had on his war clothes—for which I could hardly blame him when I got a fair look at his face. He was a match for me in the way of size, and his nerve was in good working order. But Nature blessed me with a freak pair of shoulders, and arms to match. If I'd put my heart and some temper into that first blow, he would not have bothered thereafter.

"You come outside," he growled over one shoulder, at the door, "and I'll give you what you need."

For a second I was tempted to call him. Out on the platform, with plenty of room, I could have used my six-shooter to slap the fight out of all three. But I had left my mark on two of them, and that was satisfaction of a sort. I was quite indifferent whether they thought me afraid to follow the matter up. Motives of prudence intervened. I was not worked up by any concrete grievance; and if I put a train crew out of commission I might have to answer to the mounted police. The game wasn't worth the candle. Besides, I didn't care to pose before her as a "bad" Westerner. So the only reply I made to his challenge was to laugh, and heave his lantern after him. Upon which milady quickly shut the outer door, and turned to me with a twinkle in her eye that sadly belied the gravity of her countenance.

"I'm afraid I brought that on you," she apologized.

"Why, I don't see how," said I—though I had an inkling of what she meant.

"One has to be rude to those fellows sometimes," she explained naïvely. "And it happens that I can hear quite plainly in the office even with the window down. Besides, I looked through the peephole. You were amused when I closed the window, and it ruffled him to be laughed at."

"Right, so far as it goes," I admitted. "But I was the real disturber, I'm afraid. I don't like the breed, nohow, and I don't feel like taking anything from them. So I hit him."

"I'm glad you did," she confessed impulsively. "I've only been on this division ten days, but that particular brakeman has made himself a nuisance."

"Well, you seem to have a pretty effectual way of dealing with that particular sort of nuisance," I observed—whereat we both laughed. I don't know what amused *her;* I was seeing the fellow's blank look when the window slammed down.

"Come into the office and sit down till your wire is answered," she went on. "Those fellows may come in again before they're ready to go, and there is no use tempting them to stir up more trouble. That last rumpus nearly woke the baby."

I lost no time accepting that invitation, and it did my heart good to catch a glimpse of my antagonist scowling through the pane as he passed by a minute later.

Presently the freight coughed noisily out of the yard, and the colored tail lights blinked far down the track till at length they disappeared. The stillness of night on the rangeland settled down again, broken only by the intermittent clack of the sounders. Even that seemed weak and puny.

My eyes, roving curiously about the room, alighted upon a low crib set in the shadow of a letter-press stand. From under the coverlet peeped a tousled yellow head, a tiny arm curved on the pillow beside it. Milady finished sending the telegram, turned in her chair, and caught me staring at the little one's bed. Mother fashion, she rose and tucked the coverlet close around the small body.

"Do you work a twenty-four-hour shift?" I made inquiry. She had been on duty the afternoon of my first call, and this time the presence of the crib betokened an all-night vigil.

"Oh, no," she answered softly. "I'm the regular night operator. I was only taking the agent's trick the other day, while he went to town."

Gradually we fell into a low-toned conversation. From one thing to another we drifted, and eventually I was telling her odds and ends of my daily life, of the big West that I'd ranged before settling down to the prosaic busi-

ness of ranching on my own hook, of big round-ups which were no more. In return I gleaned that she hailed from Eastern Canada, and that she had been several years at the key—and that was about all. She was a better listener than talker, most of the time. Once, in speaking of Miss Goldenhair, as I christened the baby, in a tentative way I mentioned the little one's father.

"He doesn't count for much in Bessie's scheme of things," she murmured absently—but whether he was dead or an outcast or what, something in the tone of her forbade me to ask. So I was forced to be content with that cryptic sentence. There was a reserve about Mrs. May Aldous which I had considerable delicacy about attempting to break through—in so far as her private affairs were concerned. At the same time I could not help but think of her as lonely, as eager, and as much in need of human companionship of the right sort as myself. And it gave me a little glow of pleasure, incidentally putting me on my best behavior, to know that unconsciously she classed me in a different category from the brakeman whose eye I had lately blackened.

We chatted until Medicine Hat called her, and clicked out a brief word from Plank that he would hit the trail without delay. And then I rose to go.

"I'm coming again, without any business excuse," I told her from the doorway. "Miss Goldenhair has the promise of a ride on a gentle horse. Will you trust her with me for a little while, if I come some nice evening before sundown?"

She looked at me and then at the sleeping baby in the crib, and a smile broke slowly over her face.

"I think that depends mostly on Bessie herself," she returned pleasantly. "If she accepts you as a cavalier—why, I don't mind."

CHAPTER III.

During the next four weeks two of the gentlest mounts I owned came to know the look of Bullhead Junction pretty well. Seven miles is little to a good horse, and that was approximately the distance from my ranch to the little red depot. Had I been burdened with work, I dare say I should have been less inclined to the trip. But at best time hung heavy on my hands. My little herd ranged close; I had nothing to do but watch them grow; and it was the season when they would increase and multiply in the accustomed ratio if I left them strictly alone.

From April till July—when hay cutting began—I had no pressing task save the breaking of a colt or two for myself, or the performing of a like office for some neighbor who shied at broncho fighting. My waking hours would have been spent lying about bachelor camps as lonely and unkempt as my own; and so I preferred to spend part of them at Bullhead, where one small person, at least, was unfeignedly glad of my coming.

Miss Goldenhair made me her captive and cavalier from the start. If her mother was not demonstrative, she nevertheless turned a friendly face my way. And that was encouragement enough for me.

I needed no guide to point me whither I drifted. That it might prove a stony road I could not gainsay, when I permitted my thoughts to dwell upon possibilities. But I could not help that. Nature makes a man thus and so, and there be few of us who do not follow our natural bent despite the penalties which we know must lie in wait for us at the outcome.

I knew that May Aldous was the magnet which drew me persistently to Bullhead Junction—and it was easier to go than to stay away. I felt vaguely that some day, if I kept that gait, I stood a fair chance of riding away with a hurt that would take many a moon to heal. But the gambler's instinct to flirt with chance laid fast hold of me. It was a sunny streak in an otherwise bleak existence; and if the clouds came after, why, that was part of the game.

I brought her books to wile away the long hours of her night watch at the key. Once, in a sentimental mood, I sent a great bunch of carnations from a hothouse in Medicine Hat, and rode

in the next day somewhat dubious over my action. But the flowers were in evidence, and the quiet thanks I got apprised me that I had not done amiss.

Sometimes upon a pleasant evening we three, Miss Goldenhair atop of a placid cow horse, her mother and I walking, would explore the Northwest within a radius of a mile, finding modest prairie flowers buried in the tall grass, stalking the shy mushroom in moist places. When we tired of that we would shoot at a tomato can with my six-gun—a pastime at which milady ran me a close second.

So time went winging by. Except that we met upon a frank, friendly footing, born of certain mutual likes and dislikes of divers things, I cannot say that outwardly our relations were a whit different from the first. The personal note crept in now and then, but never obtrusively. Yet we were slowly and surely drifting toward a point which I dare say we both saw, and still refused to see. One cannot stand still in such matters. For a man and a woman may walk lightly along friendship's path a month, or a year, or longer, according to their temperaments, but they will come to a fork where they must go arm in arm along a trail of their own, or each his own way. We couldn't go on as we began.

I rode into Bullhead one afternoon at four o'clock or thereabout. A small figure came whooping down the platform and launched itself boisterously into my arms.

"I seed you tummin'," she chortled breathlessly. "I waited for you to div me a wide. Mamma's walked off on d' paiwie."

I took her up in front of me and struck out over the "paiwie" after mamma. She had gone over the crest of a little rise. We came on her presently, sitting face to the south, absorbed in a letter and frowning over it. Even upon our dismounting, a trace of harassment lingered over her features.

Bessie, with no further chance for equestrian feats, wandered off a few rods, investigating gopher holes and forsaken ant heaps and such. I sat down, not so close as I would have liked, but as close as I dared. Something of constraint settled over the pair of us. There was a moody quirk to her red mouth. And I resented anything that could dampen our cheerfulness. Man fashion I went bluntly to the point.

"What's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing much."

But the tone belied her words, and involuntarily she glanced down at the sheet of note paper in her hand.

"What is it, anyway?" I urged.

She stared away across the green-tinged levels, and her under lip quivered. It's never a pleasant thing to watch a woman in tears. And when the woman happens to be the one a man cares most for—I put my arm around her, and she turned her face against my shoulder and cried quietly. I did not know why, and I could do nothing but draw her close and hold her so. What foolish words of comfort I may have whispered are of no interest to any but myself and her. Presently she wiped her eyes and tried to pull away from me. But I was master for the moment, and I would not let her go.

"Now, see here, little woman," I declared, "you may as well tell me what it's all about. Your troubles are my troubles henceforth. You like me a lot, don't you?"

She looked up at me, and I needed no words to be answered. She had more to say, though, than the message her eyes conveyed.

"I dare say you'll think I've been a silly, weak little fool," she sighed. "I know I haven't played fair with you. You're different from most men, better I think, and it was so lonesome. I guess we just drifted."

"Well," I put in, though my heart took a sudden flop with what her words suggested, and the hopeless note in her voice, "we'll just keep on drifting; only we'll drift together, you, and I, and Miss Goldenhair. I can round up a preacher and a license quicker than anybody you ever saw."

She shook her head quickly, and turned her face against my shoulder again.

"Ah, me!" she cried softly. "I wish we could, I wish we could. But there's no such luck for you and me, Wash."

It was the first time she had ever used my given name, and I kissed her for it, despite her averted head. Whereby I started a fresh flow of tears which only ceased when I gave her freedom, holding fast, however, to one small, warm hand.

"This is all my fault," she whispered brokenly. "I could see it coming, and I didn't have nerve enough to stop you. I wanted you to be a friend, and you turned into a lover, and that's impossible. Oh, this is a miserable old world."

What could I say to that? When a woman quite frankly admits that she loves, and in the same breath protests that nothing can come of it, my optimism is not equal to the occasion. So I said nothing, but waited for her. She straightened up suddenly, and thrust the letter into my hand.

"Read that," she commanded. "And I'll tell you the rest. You may as well know all about me now, as any time."

"If it's anything you'd rather I didn't know," I demurred, reluctant to betray my anxiety to fathom what manner of thing stood between us, "let's just pass it up."

"Read it; read it," she entreated. And I complied forthwith.

The letterhead bore the inscription of a detective agency in Winnipeg. Leaving out the formal beginning, the body of the missive ran thus:

We beg to acknowledge your remittance of $50.00. In response to your inquiry we regret to reply that our best effort has so far not been entirely satisfactory. Since our last report we have traced Mr. Aldous from the Turtle Mountain district to Northern Montana. In June '95 he returned to the Canadian side, assuming the name of Robert Kenny. During the next few months he was employed as a cowboy by the Canada Land and Ranches Co. in the Cypress Hills. In April '96 he was engaged as a horse breaker by the Medicine Hat Ranch Co., afterward working as a cowboy for same people. In November of that year during a quarrel he assaulted and badly wounded another employee of the company.

Immediately upon this, Mr. Aldous, still passing under the name of Kenny, disappeared—probably taking extra pains to conceal his whereabouts, as the authorities were seeking him on account of this assault. Our man made a careful and quiet attempt to trace him farther, but met with slight success.

One or two clues, which point to Mr. Aldous having taken certain directions, might be worth following up, however, if you care to undertake the expense. We would require an advance of $200.00 to go further in the matter. Wishing to assure you of our desire to serve you faithfully in this matter, we remain,

Very truly,
HOLLISTER DETECTIVE AGENCY.

I folded the typewritten sheet, and twisted it thoughtfully in my fingers. A little light had crept in on me—and a feeling akin to relief.

"Robert Kenny," I commented. "Bob Kenny. A big, fair man, about my age. A good-looking devil, with a pleasant manner, and a ferocious temper when he was stirred up. Lisped when he got excited. Does that fit your man Aldous, girlie? Was he——"

"My husband—yes," she interrupted. "You must have known him, then."

"The Medicine Hat Ranch is only about thirty miles from here," I responded. "And I worked for them through the spring round-up myself, that year. So I knew him pretty well. In fact, I was the only man in the outfit that he got along with decently."

"Well, you see, then," she broke in again, "that I haven't played quite fair with you—nor myself, either, for that matter. I haven't seen him for nearly four years. I don't care for him; sometimes I fairly hate him. And still that doesn't set me free. I'm tied to him in a way that I can't well break."

"Look here, little one," I spoke tenderly, and drew her up close to me by the hand which I had not relinquished, "I'm not a conventional collar-and-cuff moralist. I don't blame you for not shouting 'I'm married' as soon as I began to show signs of interest in you. But what is there to prevent you from having got your freedom long ago? And why do you let a grafting detective firm bleed you for money, by making a pretense of seeking him?"

She sat silent for a minute, looking soberly at Miss Goldenhair, who

crouched in a hollow fifty yards away, digging in the soft earth with her small fingers, and quite oblivious of us.

"There's the reason," she broke out passionately. "If it were not for Bessie—— I'll tell you the whole sordid story, and maybe you'll understand. You're not really and truly hurt because I'm not a bona-fide widow, are you?"

I kissed her for answer, before she could dodge me. I had a joker up my sleeve—or thought I had, at least—and her contrition stirred me. So far as I could see, we were two persons of one mind, and I didn't propose to let the shadow of a missing husband cast any great damper on our happiness.

"Go ahead," I encouraged. "I'm listening."

"I married Bob five years ago this spring," she began abruptly. "I liked him. He was good to me, in his way, at first. But he isn't the kind of man that any woman could be happy with for long. Sometimes I used to think he was part man and part devil. Not brutal, you know, but just completely self-centred and very much dissipated. He had a good position in a real-estate office when I married him—that was in Winnipeg. For a while he settled down and worked. But he'd been West in the cattle country, and he had all the Westerner's vices, with none of the accompanying virtues. After a while he began drinking, and gambling, and other things. Women seemed to have an uncanny way of getting mixed up with him.

"I haven't got a patient Griselda disposition myself. I resented all that. We had many a flare-up. Finally I had to go back to office work myself, to make a living. Things got to such a pass that I wouldn't see him for three months. I'd work and save every bit of money that I could, and when he'd come sneaking home in a penitent mood I'd forgive him and we'd start all over again—just to repeat the same miserable performance. At the last he left me not long before the baby was born. I haven't seen him since. I don't want to see him."

She stopped for a moment, and stared absently at the grass, her fingers plucking at a fold of her skirt. Then she shrugged her shoulders and went on:

"Bob hadn't many relatives. The only one that he ever spoke much about was an old uncle from whom he expected to inherit a lot of money. Bob didn't altogether run away from me. He was a hothead drunk or sober, and he was always getting into fighting scrapes"—I smiled, remembering the accuracy of that statement as applied to Bob Kenny—"and he really had to get away on account of hitting some man over the head with a chair. But he did vanish completely, and never wrote a line, which he generally did—and not long afterward this uncle died, leaving quite an estate; I don't know exactly how large, because I had no way of finding out, but somewhere near a hundred thousand dollars, all told.

"By the terms of the will Bob was to come into it when he reached thirty. The executor under the will is a hard-fisted, pettifogging lawyer called Hamilton Perrin—who had nothing to recommend him except that he was Uncle John Aldous' cousin. Perrin gets ten thousand dollars—more money than he ever had in his life, I suppose—and he is supposed to manage the rest till Bob takes it over.

"Now I'm not mercenary, Wash, and I don't want anything of that estate for myself. But I've worked ever since I was sixteen. If there's anything in the way of long hours and drudgery around a telegraph office that I haven't had more than my share of, I don't know what it can be. I can't remember my mother. My father was a railroad man, a dispatcher. He died in the harness, of heart failure, sitting in the chair with his fingers on the key. If I'd been a boy I'd have climbed a good many rounds up the ladder. Being a girl, I stuck at an operator's job. I've seen a half dozen telegraphers become agents, while I peg along on the same old bare-living wages. It's disheartening.

"I've got a baby—and I hope to God she shan't ever have to face the grind that I've had to face so far—the twelve an sixteen-hour shifts day after day

when I was near dead on my feet. Sometimes I wonder that I don't look forty years old. And for the reason that she's his child as much as mine, I mean to see that she gets her share of that money before he gets it and squanders it, which he will certainly do. That's why I set those Winnipeg people looking for him—I couldn't do it myself. So long as he isn't in evidence, I can claim nothing. If he knew what was waiting for him he'd turn up fast enough; and I think he's generous enough to provide for Bessie so that she won't be a wage slave like her mother. If he shies at that, there's the courts to compel him. But he can't be found."

"No, and he isn't likely to be," I put in quietly. "I guess I can enlighten you as to the why of that."

She looked up, startled, and I blurted out what I knew.

"I told you I knew Bob Kenny," I repeated. "We were pretty good friends. I don't think he was much worse than lots of men. I can say that much of him truthfully; because I'm positive he's dead—these eighteen months past. So you see you're free, after all."

"Go on," she muttered. "How do you know? And are you sure?"

"Well, it was this way," I put it as plainly as I knew how. "When this affair that is mentioned in your letter came off at the Medicine Hat Ranch, Bob saddled his private horse and came straight to me. I was the only man in the country that he thought enough of to trust, and he knew that the police would be hunting him, for he nearly killed that cow-puncher. I kept him lying low at the cabin for a few days, till the marks he got in the fight healed up. Then I lent him a few dollars and another horse to pack grub and bedding on, and he left one moonlit night.

"From my place he went west, and finally turned north, landing in Edmonton, changed his name again, and got another job, which put him through the winter. He wrote me all this in the spring. A month later he wrote me again from a place called Dunvegan, on Peace River. He and three other fellows were going to the Yukon overland with a bunch of beef cattle. They expected to winter at Black River, and get to Dawson City the next summer. And Bob said he was going to make a stake before he came out again. He said, too, that he had a wife, and that he wanted to go back to her like a white man. So I guess he had some conscience about you, after all. I've got those letters at home.

"But he never got through. Away back there a bad storm got them foul, and the whole outfit perished. I got that straight from a fellow who piloted another party, and had to turn back. He claimed he saw the cattle and men when the snow melted in the spring. I know that not one of the four has ever showed up since. No one in this country knows what became of Bob Kenny; I kept it to myself."

"But there's an element of doubt," she reasoned. "Bob may have got through, and he may be looking for that stake yet, somewhere in the North. I can't do anything without incontrovertible proof. You see?"

"Afraid of bigamy?" I asked lightly. "Or aren't you sure you want to take a chance on me? You haven't known me long, for a fact."

She blushed rosily.

"N-no, it isn't that," she contended. "But you don't know Mr. Hamilton Perrin. You see, while the money is legally Bob's, I can't claim a cent of it for Bessie so long as Bob merely remains absent. Perrin laid that down very clearly. He made a concession of thirty dollars a month allowance—which I've spent trying to trace Bob. So far as I can see, if he never turns up and his death isn't proven, the estate will remain in Perrin's hands indefinitely. I can't—I won't marry you till that's settled, one way or another."

"There's little room for doubt, at all, girlie," I declared. "And you don't need the confounded money, anyhow. I haven't got so very much, but enough to keep us going comfortably. And some day, if a hard winter doesn't slip up on me unaware, that little herd will

buy silks and diamonds for you. We'll be happy. You know how I feel toward you—and Goldenhair is just as if she were my own already. You know that."

"You don't know," she persisted stubbornly, "you can't realize what it is to be dependent, to face the world alone and without money—you can't possibly see a girl's side of that. I won't jeopardize Bessie's future. Not even for our happiness. If you love me, Wash, don't make it harder by trying to persuade me to do something I want to do, but mustn't. If I should marry you, and Bob should turn up—don't you see? And while you like her, and me, too, there might be a time when you wouldn't. We might be a burden, and——"

I cut in protesting against such rank heresy as that, but she smiled tearfully at me, shaking her head.

"I'm not a pessimist," she said bravely, "but you mightn't care for me always like you do now. People do change, especially men. But I'll chance that, once the way is clear. If her father is dead, and proof of it established, Bessie's share of what is his can be taken out of that smug Perrin's hands and held in trust for her. The income will make her independent of you and me, and we can live our own lives in our own way. Don't you see? God knows I'm tired of bucking the world, and lonesome enough to be glad to have some one big enough and strong enough to be good to me. But I want to do what's right."

"So do I," I whispered, and stroked the hand that lay passive in my palm. "And so I don't see any other way but to go North myself, and settle the thing beyond question."

"That's what it is to be a man," she exclaimed, brightening visibly. "I'd have done that long ago. Do you really mean it?"

"I do," said I promptly. "What else can I do?"

"What else?" she breathed, and her fingers shut down hard on mine. "Be sure you come back safe to me. That'll be enough."

CHAPTER IV.

When I got home that night my head was buzzing so that I could almost hear the squeak of my mental machinery. I sat with my feet cocked on the table, a pencil and paper in my hand, till well along into the small hours. It is always easier to promise than to perform. My consideration of ways and means led me to some tall figuring. Not that I experienced the least regret for having laid out such a task, but I had now a double necessity for safeguarding what worldly goods were mine. I had to plan for some one besides myself.

My reflection and calculation were, as a result, somewhat hampered by a tendency to dream. Up to within the last few days my twelve-by-eighteen cabin had seemed eminently satisfactory as a dwelling. Nor had such small matters as an unswept floor, or walls devoid of ornament beyond the usual nail-suspended paraphernalia of a bachelor stockman, troubled my mind.

Betimes I found myself chewing abstractedly on the pencil butt, casting a critical eye over my surroundings, seeing a vision of what might come to pass; and the general unkemptness and lack of minor comforts rose up and reproached me. When my pencil set down the cost of outfitting for the North, my mind by some subtle quirk turned upon upholstered furniture. The item of a man's wage to take my place while I fared into the wilderness, suggested the building of another two rooms to my shack. The devil got into my figures altogether. May's face kept coming up before me, till half the time I only saw the sheet in a vacant way. And at last I put the problem off until day should bring me a measure of sanity wherewith to face cold, hard facts, and went to bed.

Next morning, with my breakfast dishes washed and a more orderly arrangement of my littered cabin than I'd been guilty of in months—this as a salve to my conscience for considering a wife amid such surroundings—I once more got out my pad and pencil, and tried to find out where I stood, or

where I would stand, financially, when I was ready to hit the road.

Bank account I had none. Some two hundred dollars stowed in my boot leg constituted my available cash. That in itself was insufficient to pay ranch expenses while I was gone. Further, I did not propose to go on any extended pilgrimage without being well fortified with the stuff that makes the mare go. The one favorable circumstance lay in that I had no debts; and my credit in Medicine Hat was good for any and all ranch supplies till the beef went out in the fall. Taking it up one side and down the other, there was but one thing for me to do in the way of getting money, and that I proceeded to do at once—namely, to go forth in search of a man who would buy stock and pay cash for the same. Fortunately I knew of such a man.

At the mouth of Gros Ventre Creek lived an old Dutchman who was always open to a proposition of that sort. To him, then, went I. Before sundown of the next day his brand decorated ten of my best cows, and he held a bill of sale covering every horse I owned, barring one work team and three saddle horses That transaction netted me eight hundred dollars, and considerable relief; for I knew I could go to the Yukon and back on such a sum.

Luck came my way in other matters, after the manner of luck. My English neighbors up the creek were only too glad of a chance to turn a few dollars by range-herding my cattle while I was gone, and putting up my winter's hay on a contract basis. While they did not shine as cow-punchers, I knew them to be men of their word, and for all the range technique required they could do as well as I. So I felt that my ranch affairs, which in truth meant my livelihood, would not suffer even if I spent all summer on the outer edge of nowhere.

That settled, I bethought me of a trifling business matter in Medicine Hat, and rode in to attend to it. I wanted to go with everything clear behind me. The man I wished to see was not to be found, however, until late in the afternoon. Hence I put up at the Curry House, promising myself an early start home in the morning. I wanted to see milady once more, and then I was for Edmonton.

That evening by seven o'clock I had seen all of Medicine Hat I cared to, and lounged into the hotel. The clerk bore down upon me as I intrenched myself behind a newspaper.

"There was a party in here looking for you about half an hour ago," he informed me. "Said he wanted to see you. Acted like he had some important business—by the questions he asked. Here's a card he left. And he told me to ask you would you come down to the Occidental—that's where he's putting up."

I took the card, and, believe me, my eyes opened a trifle when I read thereon:

MR. HAMILTON PERRIN

Below the name was penciled the number of his room in the Occidental Hotel. Would I go and see Mr. Perrin? Yea and verily. But I was puzzled to understand how he knew aught of me, and what he could want.

"You say he was here half an hour ago, eh?" I observed. "And he left word for me to come and see him. Did you tell him I was apt to be here any minute?"

"Sure," the clerk replied. "He hung around a while waiting. Then he gave me the card for you. I think he did say he'd be around again—if you didn't show up at the Occidental."

The clerk returned to his business, and I sat blinking at the piece of pasteboard. That, however, shed no light on what might be to the fore. Eventually I concluded that I would see what Mr. Perrin wanted of me, since he had taken pains to make it clear that he wanted something. I made a guess that it bore upon my friend Kenny, otherwise Aldous and other cognomens. Having arrived at this conclusion, I walked out and down the street to the hostelry he had fixed upon.

There I learned that Mr. Perrin had

just ascended to his room; and the clerk sent up a messenger, who shortly returned with the information that Mr. Perrin would be glad if Mr. Grover would come up in person.

My preconceived notion of Mr. Hamilton Perrin's appearance, born of May's terse description, "a hard-fisted, pettifogging lawyer," was effectually dispelled at the first glimpse. Unconsciously I had pictured a lean, cadaverous individual in a suit of rusty black, thoroughly conventional in manners, morals, and dress. The gentleman who greeted me upon entering was the exact antithesis of this, or at least he gave that effect. His feet were on the dresser, a long cigar bulged one corner of his thick-lipped mouth. He was at his ease and enjoying it. Physically he appeared to be of medium height, fat, red-faced, and somewhat gray about the temples. He sported a two-carat diamond stuck rakishly in a very loud cravat. Offhand, I should have put him down for a successful dry-goods drummer. He did not trouble to rise, but extended a hand.

"Have a chair, Mr. Grover," he invited. "Will you join me in a drink or a cigar? You wait a second, Buttons."

"Well," I replied, "I'll take a Scotch with you, but for a smoke I'll stick to the Durham and white papers."

"Two whiskies," he told the boy, and the youth closed the door upon us.

"You left a card for me at the Curry House," I began. "I take it that you have some sort of business with me."

"Yes, in a way." He took his cigar between his fingers, and eyed it critically as if looking for flaws. "I'm looking for information in regard to a certain party, and I was told you were likely to know more about him than any one."

"Yes?" I made the comment interrogative.

"Uh-huh." He replaced the cigar, and, clasping both hands at the back of his head, stared at me unwinkingly.

"You know a man named Bob Kenny, who worked for the Medicine Hat Ranch Company two years ago."

This was more a statement of fact than a question, but I replied, as I saw no reason for denying it:

"I did know such a man. What of it?"

"I want to locate him," he came out bluntly.

"There are others," I grinned. "The mounted police, for instance."

"Oh, hang the police," he grunted. "They haven't got anything to do with this case. Do you know where Kenny is now?"

Buttons, with our liquor, stepped in at that period. When he had served us and gone again, Perrin repeated the question.

"Maybe I do, maybe I don't," I parried. "What makes you think I should know? And if I did, why should I tell you, a stranger? You may have a warrant for Bob in your pocket, so far as I can tell."

"You Western men certainly have a way of standing by a friend to the limit," he remarked. "I have no warrant for Kenny. Set your mind easy on that. I'm simply desirous of locating him on account of a business matter, which is more important to him than anything else he may be mixed up in. I have been on the lookout for him quite a while. And as a result of systematic inquiry I learned that he was supposed to be on better terms with you than any one in this part of the world. Also, that he went straight to your place after getting into a fight at the ranch where he was employed. The supposition is that you helped him out of the country. Now I happen to have some personal knowledge of Mr. Kenny's temperament. If you did any favor for him, he was quite likely to keep in touch with you afterward. That is why I expect you to have the information I want. You needn't fear betraying a confidence. I'm not seeking Kenny to do him harm. If you know where he is, say so."

"You make a very good talk," I admitted. "And all that you say may be true, but I'm not satisfied yet that I ought to tell you anything I know about Bob Kenny."

"If you know anything," he said

quietly, watching me out of the corner of his eye, "I'll make it worth your while to talk."

"My information isn't for sale, old-timer," I responded dryly. "If you convince me that you're looking for Bob Kenny with good reason—outside of setting the law on him—what little I know is at your service with no price on it whatever. Otherwise, I'm dumb."

"You put it up to me in a very difficult way, Grover," he deprecated. "I can only give you my word of honor that I'd go to any length to avoid setting the police on Kenny. I don't want to stir up the past. My business is entirely of a private nature."

Now, there was something about the secretive attitude of Mr. Hamilton Perrin which roused a suspicion that his way had more than one angle to it. If he sought Bob Kenny in order to be rid of the burden of his executorship, to place in Bob's hands his heritage and be done with it, why should he be so careful to conceal that purpose from an avowed friend?

That stuck in my crop. I wondered just what the man was up to—or if it were merely the habitual secretiveness of the legal fraternity. I sat a minute reflecting upon his last sentence, finally reaching the conclusion that I would tell him what had befallen Kenny—but in such general terms that he would be little the wiser, save for having my word that Kenny was no longer a factor in the game.

Even to myself I could not deny the possibility of Bob having got through. If he had—which I meant to know in the near future—it left a pretty serious problem up to me; but I had no mind to make trouble for him by wagging my tongue without cause. I liked the reckless beggar, what I had seen of him, and I couldn't regard him malevolently, even though he were alive and a bar between me and the woman I loved. I felt positive that Emil Papineau had told a straight yarn about the catastrophe which overtook those four with their little beef herd—but I was not taking chances, not with Mr. Perrin and his yet-to-be-revealed business.

"All things considered," said I thoughtfully, "I don't know that it makes much difference whether I keep quiet or not. I wanted to be sure that you weren't trying to hit him over my shoulder. But I honestly don't believe you'll ever transact any business, private or otherwise, with Bob Kenny. To the best of my knowledge he's dead."

"Ah!"

Whether the peculiar inflection on the monosyllable denoted relief, surprise, or plain incredulity, I was unable to decide. Mr. Hamilton Perrin, I found myself thinking, should be a highly successful poker player. His countenance gave not the slightest key to his emotions.

"Are you positive of that?" he asked after a few seconds. "Where, and when, and how did he die?"

"I'm not prepared to take oath on it," I answered. "Nor have I any proof that would be accepted as conclusive in court. But I do know from Kenny himself that he started for the Yukon. And I have it on fairly reliable authority that he perished on the way—a year ago last winter. It's pretty well established that he, with three others, died in a blizzard, without benefit of clergy, and their bones are yet awaiting burial, if the wolves haven't carried them away."

"Where did this happen?" he asked abruptly.

"Up North," I replied in the same vein. His catechizing savored of cross-examination, and I did not mean to divulge any detailed testimony until I was sure of my ground. The more I saw of Mr. Perrin, the less I liked his style; especially when I remembered that he was the custodian of funds which milady May expected to fight for.

"Yes, but in what part of the North?" he persisted.

"That," I returned coolly, "is something I can't tell you."

"You mean you won't," he put in.

"Well—if you care to put it that way," I admitted.

"Why?" he came back.

"Because," I retorted with some manifestation of impatience, "in the

first place I have only your word for what you want of him, and in the second place I have no right to advertise my knowledge of him. If you should go seeking, others might follow—and he *may* be up in the North very much alive. In which case he wouldn't thank me for starting a hue and cry that might lead to his arrest. He came near killing a man, you know. The Mounted Police is gifted with a long arm——"

"Then you do know where he 'cashed in,' as you fellows out here put it," Perrin remarked this to himself as much as to me.

"I do," was my tantalizing assertion, "near enough to put my finger on the spot if there was a map handy."

He reflected upon this for some little time, and then he favored me with another long, searching look.

"Finding Bob Kenny, or getting positive proof of his—ah—demise, is of some slight importance to me," he observed—which was rather noncommittal, in view of my knowledge of the attendant circumstances. "Would you consider an offer to take an active part in establishing that proof—taking it for granted that you are not mistaken?"

"Perhaps," I temporized. "That would depend on certain things."

"If it's a question of money," he went on, "I'll pay, and pay well. I suppose you know the country as well as any one. The thing would be to go and see, would it not? I'm willing to follow your lead without asking questions until you're satisfied to tell me all you know."

"The place," I replied, "is in a most God-forsaken wilderness. It means a two or three months' trip, and that will cost considerable. What do you want to do? Bring the man's bones out? Or just simply make sure he's dead?"

"Well," he returned, stroking his chin abstractedly, "if I were personally in possession of proof that he is deceased I think that—ah—would be sufficient. I should very much like to have your assistance in this, Mr. Grover. What do you say?"

I thought a second. If Bob were dead Mr. Hamilton Perrin could not hold up a settlement of the estate on account of the missing heir, when he himself had established the fact of said heir's demise—to use the legal phraseology. At the same time, I did not wish to commit myself until I had talked with May. I did not know what light she might be able to let in on this move of his.

"To be candid," I told him at last, "I'm not prepared to say right this minute. I have a few responsibilities of my own, you know. I can't jump into such an undertaking offhand. If there's enough in it, I guess I could let my ranch take care of itself for a while. But even then I don't know about bucking the North. It won't be any picnic party. That's a hard country."

"As to terms," he suggested, passing up the latter part of my statement, "I'll pay all expenses, and you can put your own price on your services—in reason, of course," he amended cautiously.

"If I take you up," said I, "I'll charge you just what my time is worth to me, and that will be between three and four dollars a day. But I'll have to think it over. It's not a job I hanker for."

"To be sure not, to be sure not," he agreed in his most ingratiating way. "Still I'd like to have you undertake it. Your knowing Kenny so well makes it more of a personal matter. I'd like to have you help me out on this, indeed."

"I'll have to think it over," I repeated. "I'll let you know—say day after to-morrow; if you're going to be here that long."

"I'll make it my business to be here," he smiled affably. "Day after to-morrow, then."

I reached for my hat, which had fallen to the floor, and at this sign of departure he took his feet from the dresser and arose.

"Let's have a nightcap, below," he proposed, and upon my agreement to the motion we adjourned to the bar; whence I escaped Mr. Hamilton Perrin's conversational clutches as soon as possible, for I recollected that a train went east at ten o'clock, and I had a

sudden desire to talk with that lonely little girl at the key of Bullhead depot.

The glance she sent through the ticket window amply repaid me for my trouble. A few passengers alighted, and stood uncertainly in the waiting room. The train tarried but a few seconds, and presently it went drumming into the night. And when passengers and the usual quota of train greeters betook themselves over town she opened the office door and let me in.

We were circumspect enough in our greeting in deference to the unshaded windows that flared to the south, and a possibility of some local Peeping Tom having an eye on us. Without ado I plunged into a rehearsal of my unexpected meeting with Perrin.

"What do you suppose he's up to?" I concluded.

She shook her head.

"Heaven only knows," she sighed. "That is Hamilton Perrin, by your description. If he were seeking Bob in an honest endeavor to wind up the estate it seems odd that he would keep shy of me. He knows where I am. I have to notify him when I make a change, so that he can forward the pittance he so graciously allows me. It does look queer that he should be trying to locate Bob in the surreptitious way. Especially when he has let three years go by without making an effort to trace him. Why, he refused to do that when I asked him to. He said he had no authority to spend estate funds for any such purpose, and that Bob would undoubtedly claim his own in good time. He told me that in his best legal manner."

"He struck me as being a gay old sport," I remarked. "I don't think he'd rush across a continent just to hand a man some money that might be coming to him. I don't think he's the boy to try and get rid of any responsibility that allowed him the handling of a good-sized income right along. He looks to me like a high roller, that same Mr. H. Perrin."

"That was my impression of him, from what little I saw," she returned dryly. "His opportunities for riotous living were decidedly limited, though, until he got that money from Uncle John Aldous."

"Ten thousand dollars doesn't go very far if a man tries to fly high," I observed, remembering his big diamond and his black cigars and his enthusiasm for little drinks of Scotch. "But that's neither here nor there. I just thought you possibly knew more of why he was in such a twist to find Kenny—without making clear just why he does want to find him. Since he's doing it on his own hook, I'll just take the gentleman at his word, and settle the thing one way or the other. I'm all ready to start anyhow, and I may as well take him up on his offer. Whichever way it goes, he pays the freight. Which puts the joke on him, I think."

That being settled, I refused to talk further on the none-too-agreeable subject, when all our speculation was, in the very nature of the case, bound to prove unfruitful. So we sat there saying foolish nothings until Number Seven, west-bound, rolled up to the platform, and then I stole a good-by kiss and swung aboard.

If the clerk in the Curry House wondered what diversion I found in Medicine Hat to keep me abroad till three in the morning, he had the grace to keep his wonder strictly to himself—except for a mildly inquiring look when I asked for my key. And, having made up my mind to join forces with Mr. Hamilton Perrin in a search for a dead man's bones, I rolled in and went to sleep with a good conscience.

CHAPTER V.

It would be next thing to digression for me to relate in detail how I closed a bargain with Perrin at the appointed time. If I had not done so Mr. Hamilton P. would step down and out right here, so far as that Northern trip is concerned. It would be sufficient to remark that we boarded a train three days later, with transportation engaged to Edmonton, and my new employer full of unsatisfied curiosity. He kept within the letter of our agreement to

ask no questions, but it cost him an effort. Perhaps I was maliciously silent. His informational longings amused me. If he had been frank about his own mission I should have met him halfway. As it was, my feelings toward him were of a distrustful neutrality. There was no question of incipient friendship. I gave him plainly to understand that it was a straight business matter with me.

In due time we landed in "The Gateway of the North," as Edmonton is justly known, for from out its one-time sleepy precincts more men—fur traders, hunters, trappers, gold seekers, and the like—have fared into the solitude of the North than from any other point on the thousand miles that lies between old Fort Garry and the Rockies. Nowadays Edmonton is a metropolis. Wheat has taken the place of furs and adventure. But it was far from such, then.

Once there I left Perrin to his own devices, shook him off, in fact, and made guarded inquiries in my own way, seeking information from avenues opened to me by trifling remarks in the two letters Kenny had written—I thought of him as Kenny and speak so of him; since by that name I knew him, though he took a different alias when he left the Cypress country, as a matter of prudence.

And my inquiries bore fruit. I learned that beyond a doubt the party of four had vanished beyond Peace River. Not one had reached the Yukon, or come back. Also, the story told me by Emil Papineau was rehashed by divers mouths. Though I met no man who could say that he had seen Kenny and his companions with their hundred head of beef stark in that land of deep snows, yet I bespoke some who were very sure, some who even knew where a man should look to find them. Within twenty-four hours the way was mapped out.

We must cross Peace River, traverse the Height of Land, back to a thin-spun prong of the great Mackenzie. At a certain spot near the foot of the mountains we would find a Hudson's Bay post, where would be men who knew "The Place of Skeletons"—from the bleached bones of the dead cattle.

Armed with these gleanings, the ultimate gathering of which took me ten miles down the Saskatchewan to a half-breed camp, I put it up to Perrin, withholding no detail—for I had little room to believe Kenny still alive. My lawyer-executor-employer pinched his brows together, and bade me prepare to follow the trail to the end.

"For," said he epigrammatically, "circumstantial evidence may serve to hang a man, but it does not always prove him defunct. Personally I wish to be sure."

Which suited me very well. I, too, wished to be sure. And I was quite as anxious that Mr. Perrin should be surfeited with proof, as he himself desired. So I purchased horses, and engaged a man to haul us as far as a road ran—with cash furnished by Perrin—and furbished a pack outfit with three months' grub. This in the course of a day.

When supper time drew near and I returned to our hostelry, primed for a good night's rest against a daylight start, Mr. Hamilton Perrin was not in evidence. Nor did he come while the evening meal was in progress.

When dark found him still absent, I went forth in search. A word from the barkeeper of our stopping place gave me a hint, and made me a trifle irritated. Mr. Hamilton Perrin had struck a fast pace over the brandy-and-soda route that afternoon. It was my expectation to find him in some dubious place, more or less drunk. And I had had a bit of experience in the vagaries of drunken men. I had no wish to be delayed next day, while he sobered up after an all-night spree. My heart was not in the North, that I cared to waste time over his doubtful pleasures.

A devil's dance he led me. Like many another frontier town, "The Gateway" had its share of dives—the more unlicensed as to their mode of operation by reason of civic virtue having driven them beyond the town limits, where piano thumping, and dancing,

and midnight revelry could not disturb the somnolently respectable.

From one to another of the three hotel bars I traced him, finding that he had made the rounds, growing more tipsily exuberant in company with a chance companion.

Eventually I stumbled on the liveryman whose conveyance they had chartered to haul them whither they listed. With no particular hostility, but resolved not to be delayed through what might be a protracted debauch, I impressed the same rig, and followed to where the red lights glowed in the dusk.

The driver, who proved the right sort in an emergency, and myself, extracted Perrin, drunk, disorderly, and prone to song, from the midst of a joyous revel—but not before the crowd which found him so congenial a spirit did its best to start a full-fledged "rough-house," aided and abetted by Perrin, who was in no mind to forsake the dance hall for a quiet room in the hotel.

But we nipped that demonstration in the bud, the livery driver with a convenient billet of wood, and I with a lawless flourish of my six-shooter. When they saw we were not a pair of cheap bluffers, the ladies and gentlemen of the hurdy-gurdy gave way, and we dragged Perrin bodily from the room, and deposited him ungently in the rig.

For all his riotous festivity, the red-faced old reprobate was close-lipped as an oyster anent the business we were on—or rather the business *he* was on. He certainly carried a full load without letting his tongue ran amuck, an uncommon virtue in a man so drunk. He wanted to sing and dance, challenged us to a foot race, wept spasmodically because we had rudely compelled him to foregot what he termed a "hell 'f a goo' time, boys"—but never a word of Bob Kenny, even when I reminded him of our plans, and the necessity of a clear head.

There was no pacifying him or getting him to bed, even when I had him in the hotel. As a last resort I stood him up to the bar and ordered drinks as fast as he could assimilate them, making a pretense of keeping him company, but in reality dumping glass after glass of whisky into a near-by cuspidor. This heroic treatment stilled the croakings which he insisted were "song," and shortly reduced him to a state of inebriety which enabled the barkeeper, the liveryman, and myself to carry him like a limp bundle to his room, where I peeled off his coat and shoes and left him to his drunken slumber.

He came to an early breakfast looking considerably the worse for wear. But he was a game old sport, nevertheless. He made no reference to the past evening when I told him the outfit was ready to start, only I was amused to see him surreptitiously press his temples and make a wry face when I seemed not to be looking. I hustled him through the ceremony of putting his personal effects in traveling shape, and he climbed into the wagon which was to haul our goods to Peace River Landing.

Beyond that no trails ran. It was Mr. Perrin for the saddle—and he told me that since boyhood he had not ridden a horse. It was lucky for him he did not have to sit a horse that morning, by the way he nursed his head. The "morning-after" ache joined to saddle soreness would have finished him before noon.

Thus at last we were fairly committed to a quest which worked out strangely for each of us—as I came to know later—though it seemed matter of fact enough in the beginning. Chance dealt with us according to her accustomed vagaries; and I was compelled to cultivate the philosophy of taking things as they came, when I could not see them coming in time to forestall them.

CHAPTER VI.

On the bank of Peace River we lashed our goods on the pack horses and turned back the wagon. I suggested a half-breed guide, but Perrin caviled at the added expense, and put me on my mettle with some of his re-

marks. So we plunged into a forest, through which I steered like a mariner on the high seas; chiefly by aid of a compass. A natural sense of direction and the counsel of certain old-timers at the landing also proved exceedingly useful. Thus, though traversing an unknown land where beaten paths were yet to be, we made fair progress.

After all, we had little need of a guide. We had but to use passable judgment and bear tolerably straight for Christmas House—which, lest the odd name mislead, I hasten to explain was the Hudson's Bay post lying nearest the spot where that luckless expedition built its last camp fire.

And as all journeys must end somewhere, some time, so did we after many weeks' plodding single file through that country of great spaces and intolerable silences, crossing streams of all sizes and degrees of swiftness, depth, and turbidity, come at last to Christmas House on Little Wapiti.

We had paused an hour before sundown upon the bank of this stream, whereon, according to the map and our information, the post should be; and spent a footless half hour in speculating whether it were best to go upstream or down to find the place. Mr. Hamilton Perrin, whose manners and temper had hardened in conjunction with his muscles, through the stress of unaccustomed journeying, finally swung off his horse.

"I've had about enough for to-day, anyhow," he grunted. "This is a fair-looking place to camp. If we get down into that valley there'll be those—mosquitoes! That post won't run away overnight."

"Well," I agreed, "I guess that's not a bad idea. We may be just around the bend, and we may be twenty-five miles in either direction."

So we hobbled out our stock, and built a smudge to keep them from being devoured by the hungry swarm of winged pests that buzzed around. There was little choice where they were concerned, between bottom or bench land, despite Perrin's idea that they might be worse in the valley. The Northern mosquito is about the most energetic member of the species, and his business hours in that locality are from dawn to dawn during the months of June, July, and August. Hence the smudge—in the smoke of which our horses could graze in peace.

Then we made a fire and cooked our supper. Afterward we smoked silently, as was our habit. And it was when the long twilight spread the graying shadow of night deep over the woods that we saw a light blink cheerfully far down the Wapiti. That lone beacon proved at sunrise to mark our destination. For an amateur woodsman I had come close to the mark. Even Perrin grudgingly admitted that, as we drew up at the stockade and a half-breed assured us that this was indeed Christmas House.

The factor himself met us at the gate and made us free of his house; for these voluntary exiles are the soul of hospitality to a wayfarer—unless he come as a free trader, seeking to trench upon the ancient Hudson's Bay monopoly of barter with the hunting tribes. Which would doubtless wonderfully change the complexion of his welcome.

We unpacked and turned our stock out to graze, and upon reaching his quarters joined him in a stiff swig of brandy, which warmed the cockles of Perrin's heart as nothing since we left Edmonton had done. And over our drink I made known to Factor Grimes the nature and purpose of our pilgrimage. He nodded when I spoke of men at Christmas House who might know more than did we.

"Indeed, yes," he declared. "The Place of Skeletons is no foolish yarn, dreamed by some hunter. But wait. I know little of it myself, only what I have been told by the *voyageurs*. There is a man, however—Jacques. Jacques!" He lifted up his voice in summons to a half-breed boy lounging on the porch steps of the squat log house.

"Find Philip Baronne and send him here," he commanded. "If he is not at the wood chopping, as he should be,

look in his cabin. Quickly now. Waste no time."

The lad evidently obeyed the latter injunction faithfully, for he was no more than gone before he was back again. With him returned a short, broad-shouldered breed, swarthy and smiling as he bowed to the factor. Grimes talked to him a minute in the *patois*. Baronne cast a curious eye on us.

"Philip knows more of that place than any other man," Grimes turned to me. "He—but tell the tale yourself, Philip."

Thus adjured the half-breed hitched his multicolored sash a trifle tighter, and spoke.

"'Bout year 'go las' fall," he began slowly, "me an' Louis Pellieu we're com' from op een de mountain cross de Liard an' we're meet four men w'at drive de bonch of cows. She's noon, an' we're stop an' mak' for eat weet dem. She's say she's gon' 'way op Nort', on de Yukon, an' sell dem cow for beef. She's pretty late een de fall, an' Ah'm ask how she's gon' for keep dem cow 'live all weenter. She's laugh an' say she's mak' out all right. Me an' Louis we're een som' horee, so we're eat an' say good-by."

He stopped and Grimes nodded.

"Go ahead, Philip," he prompted. "These gentlemen want to know what became of the four men and the cattle. *Sabe?*"

Baronne grinned widely.

"Well, Ah say to Louis dat day, dem fellers dere gon' have one beeg tam' weet dem cow," he continued. "Ah don' theenk dere gon' mak' out ver' well. Ah'm not see dem fellers no more, an Ah don't know eef nobody she's see 'em 'tall no more dat weenter. Een de spreeng de factor here, she start me an' Eenjun call Hungry Boy for tak' message on pos' nort' of de Liard Reever. De snow she's steel lay som'—quite bit. We're horee, me'n dees Eenjun. 'Long 'bout ten mile, maybeso, dees side de reever we're have to cross beeg coulee. All full snow. We're have ver' toff job for cross. So we're mak' camp. Dees Eenjun she's go for get som' dry wood an' Ah'm hear him grunt. 'Wa's matter?' Ah'm say to heem. An' she's say, 'Ah'm fin' som'teeng.' 'Well,' Ah'm say, 'W'at you're fin'?' But she's jus' stan' lookin', an' bimeby she's com' breeng dry wood—an' som'teeng een de han'.

"Ah'm look, an' see eet ees de foot off one dem cow. Ah'm theenk so, jus'. lak dat, queek. But dees Eenjun hees not *sabe* de cow; Ah'm never tell heem 'bout dem feller Ah'm see fall before. She's say de wolf been carry an' eat heem, an' she's wonder 'bout dem cow foot. Den' Ah'm tell heem. So we mak' supper. After w'ile Eenjun she's say, '*Monyas* cow die. Maybeso *monyas* she's go dead, too.' Ah'm say, 'Ah spo' so,' an' pretty soon we're geet een de blanket for sleep.

"Nex' day we're go on. Bimeby we're mak' Fort Charles an' turn roun' for come back queeck. De snow she's all tam melt, but ver' col' somtam, jus' sam'. We're keep close on foot of de mountain, for maybeso strike bear w'en she's com' out. One day we're heet creek call White Birch, an' follow heem op. She's roff contree, dat creek, an' right dere we're fin' how dem fellers she's mak' out. Me an' Hungry Boy we're tak' notion for look down een Greezly Basin, an' firs' theeng we're see ees dead cow!

"She's all lay een bonch right dere, jus' stick op troo snow so she's can be see for us. Ah'm say to Hungry Boy, 'Bagosh, Ah'm gon' down, me, for tak' look.'

"Greezly Basin she's one dam' mean place for go, m'sieu. An' w'en we're geet down, we're fin' dem feller. Dere try for mak' som' shelter, an' dere lay out steef close by. One she'l all cover op een snow—all bot de foot w'at steek out. Ah'm theenk de beeg storm she's catchem, an' dere geet bury een de snow. She's been dead long tam, anyhow.

"So me an' Hungry Boy we're tak' dem feller an' cover heem op weet de rock. De wolf she's geet fat on dem cow, but she's don't toch de man—only one feller she's got de face chew som'. Ah'm know de wolf eat heem sure w'en

de snows all melt, an' Ah'm not lak' for theenk dat, me. We're have no shovel for deeg grave. Besides de groun' she's froze lak' hell. So we're pile rocks all over heem, an' leave heem dere. We're tak' only de gon and cat'idge."

"Do you remember," I asked quickly, "what those fellows looked like?"

This may seem like a mighty tax on the recollection of a chance meeting. But I knew the faculty of keen observation bred in men who habitually face unpeopled stretches. A cowpuncher, a trapper, and hunter, or a Hudson's Bay half-breed rarely forgets a face, even seen but once—he sees so few unfamiliar ones, that ten minutes' casual talk with a stranger will fix the features of that stranger forever on his memory. And Baronne was no exception to the rule.

"Sure," he replied instantly. "Two of dem she's short, fat feller, an' not young man no more. One she's long an' ver' skeeny, weet nose lak' de eagle, an' cross-eyes, so she's look two ways de sam' tam'. De odder feller she's young man, an' beeg. Hosky for look, dat man. Ah'm never theenk *she's* mak' for die een snow bank."

"Now, listen, Philip," said I, forestalling Perrin in my eagerness. "Was this young man about my size? A little taller, maybe. Did he have hair yellow as a new moccasin, and blue eyes? Did he have a little scar on one side of his nose—right here—well, maybe you wouldn't notice that. If he was the man I think, you'd see when he laughed that two teeth were broken out—these two. And when he talked, every once in a while he'd say, 'By the great horn spoon!' "

"Dat's heem, for sure!" Baronne exclaimed. "Ah'm notice dem theeng w'at you say, all right. Dat feller—bagosh, me, Ah'm tak' off hees peestol an' belt maself, an' geeve to de factor w'en Ah'm geet back here."

"That is so," Grimes affirmed. "Philip brought me the guns. I allowed him to keep a rifle, and Hungry Boy took one. The other rifles and two revolvers I have yet."

He went to a massive homemade desk and took from a drawer two worn cartridge belts, the broad double-leather kind worn by range riders. The guns were in their scabbards. He slid them across the table to me. One was a plain blued finish old forty-five, duplicate of ten thousand such frontier weapons, but I picked up the other with eager hand. It sported a pearl grip, ornately carved. Silver-inlay work decorated cylinder, barrel, and frame. I knew it as I did my own.

"You took this off the man I speak of, eh, Philip?"

I knew he must have done so—without hearing his assurance. I don't suppose there was ever another Colt like that turned out of the factory—and I had watched it swinging at Bob Kenny's hip all through one spring roundup.

"Ah'm tak' dat off heem, yes," Baronne answered.

Then the four of us sat silent for a minute, I balancing the six-shooter in my hand, Perrin stroking his chin with an unreadable expression on his face.

"Well," I spoke to Perrin at length, "I guess that settles Bob Kenny's hash, beyond any room for doubt. But to make dead sure I suppose you'll want to go to the place, and see for yourself what's under that pile of rocks. He probably had a few papers and trinkets on him that would absolutely establish his identity. And if they were well covered—things don't rot so fast in this climate."

"Um-m, yes," he answered reflectively. "I dare say it would be as well to make—ah—a thorough investigation, while we're on the spot."

I intended to, anyway, regardless of what Mr. Hamilton Perrin might or might not think advisable, but so long as he was willing to keep step I wanted to dodge a clash of wishes. It flashed into my mind then that Baronne could save us both time and possible difficulties of location. I turned to Grimes.

"What chance is there to get Philip to guide us to that place?" I inquired.

"Best in the world," he responded

accommodatingly. "There's little to do about the post these days. I can easily spare Philip, if you're minded to have him lead the way. Yon place is not so far, as distance goes, but 'tis in a monstrous rough country. Yes, surely you're welcome to any help I can give."

I thanked him, and Baronne grinned his wide, tooth-displaying smile, when he caught the drift of our talk. And though Perrin would fain have tarried a twenty-four-hour span, as Grimes tried to persuade us to do, I was keen to have the unwelcome job over and done with, that I could wing south again; and so I hustled our outfit together and struck the trail when the noonday meal was eaten.

We took only what grub would tide us there and back. With one pack horse stripped of his burden Baronne was mounted, to make speed denied a man afoot. And in this wise we set out on the last lap of our quest.

CHAPTER VII.

It took us three days of hard going to reach White Birch, three days of forging northwestward till we were at the base of a mountain range where the streams ran small and swift and the country was broken into deep-cleft coulees and rocky, scrub-timbered ridges. Late the afternoon of the third day Philip pointed out a hollow in the hills before us.

"Dat ees heem," he remarked. "We're not gon' geet een dere to-night. She's one dam' mean place for go, dat. Ah'm theenk we bes' mak' de camp soon."

The succeeding forenoon amply proved the truth of that statement. The Place of Skeletons, which name, according to Baronne, had supplanted the older one of Grizzly Basin among those wandering hunters who had looked down on the dead herd, was a box cañon rather than a basin. It opened on a tiny stream, to a width of perhaps three hundred feet. Lengthwise it ran no more than a quarter of a mile. A thin fringe of poplars bordered the creeklet which flowed through. An acre patch of cherry scrub masked the upper end. Above and below it narrowed to a gorge, impassable for miles to aught that walked upon legs.

"She's lak' thees, Ah'm theenk," Philip explained, when we halted to look down into the straight-walled hole. "Dem fellers she's not know dees contree ver' moch. She's heet dees place, an' dere's no way for cross ten mile dees way, ten mile dat way. She's jus' one place for geet troo here; w'en dere come een from de sout'. Dat's right over dere."

He indicated a notched incline directly opposite, where I could, by a vigorous stretch of my imagination, conceive of cattle getting down.

"Den she's hafto go op de flat to de odder end, *sabe?* an' clim' lak' hell for geet out. Ah'm theenk dem feller she's work hard for geet dem cow down een, an' den mak' de camp for night. De storm she's heet dem, an' dere stay here teel de snow ees pile an' pile een dem two coulee so de can' geet out—teel der not get out 'tall, no more. She's regular trap, dees place, een de weenter.

"She's one ver' bad storm, dat tam Ah'm remember," Baronne concluded reminiscently. "Snow for week—an' blow, *Sacré!* Den she's blow som' more. W'en snow geets deep here she's all sam' lak' be een deep well weet no rope, dem cow an' dem fellers."

I could very well believe that from the look of the place. We stood there, peering thoughtfully into it for a few minutes longer. Then Philip led the way to the western end, where by dint of scrambling and sliding we got to the bottom in the course of half an hour. I don't know if we would have got down without broken bones or no, if we'd undertaken to bring in our horses. Looking up from the smooth floor of that hell's pocket I wondered how long it would take us to climb out, and I could see how a blizzard would seal that opening beyond the power of man to get through—it was a mere V-shaped crevice in a bank four hundred feet high and straight as the side of a house.

Hard by the cherry patch I, in the

lead, hooked my toe in the vertebræ of an animal hidden in the lush grass which shoots up rankly during the short, hot, Northern summer. And all about lay others. The brush was full of them, where they had died huddling in the scant shelter. The storm, ravening out of the breeding ground of fall storms in that latitude, had driven them to the upper end of the flat. So much for the cattle. I turned to Philip.

"I'd rather be on the hills than in this pot hole," said I. "Where is the rock pile?"

"Down below," he returned. "Bagosh, good theeng we don' have lead dem hoss op dat heel. Come on, Ah'm show you."

Straight down the flat, knee high in sweet grasses—out of which rose a cloud of mosquitoes at every step—he led us till we stood under the towering bank. And a dozen yards from the foot of it, in a space of ground given over to boulders and a litter of sandstone chunks flaked from the face of the cliff by storms, and wind, and frost, he pointed out two cairns, piled haphazard and fifty feet apart.

"You didn't put them all together, then?" I observed.

"Bagosh, no," Baronne replied. "We're not want for handle dem fellers moch. We're pull heem from de snow bank an' cover heem op queek."

He could not say positively in which cairn they had lain Kenny. So, wasting no time in speculation, we began on the nearest pile. It took us but a little while to expose that which lay beneath, wrapped in a piece torn from their tent.

"Dees ees de short, fat feller," Philip declared, at sight of the partly decayed clothing. "Dees man you wan', she's een odder pile, all righ'."

And he was. In the little over a year they had slept there, the flesh had vanished from their bones, leaving the skeletons articulate with cartilage which is little prone to immediate disintegration. I needed no spurrings of memory, or mustering up of proofs. About Kenny's frame were a coat that was familiar and a sweater that I myself had given him. There were also the corroborative marks given me by May—a gold-crowned molar in the upper jaw, two amalgam-filled in the lower, and the cuspids broken from his mouth in the fight which had sent him a fugitive from my ranch.

Also, I looked for a knitted fracture in his left arm, and found it. Moreover, in the pocket of the rotting coat, I found a leather memorandum book, which Mr. Hamilton Perrin would have taken possession of unopened if I had permitted.

"Not so fast," said I shortly. I felt that the time had come when I must play my own hand regardless of him. "I want to see what's in it."

Just inside the flap lay my reply to his first letter from Edmonton, together with a few odds and ends of other missives, some addressed to Barker—his last alias—and one or two to Robert Kenny. I turned the leaves further. Suddenly from between the pages flashed a kodak print of milady May. I hardly glimpsed it. Perrin's head was close to the book as my own, and his fat fingers plucked the small photo away and crushed it into a shapeless wad.

For the next three seconds Mr. Hamilton Perrin was nearer to grievous bodily injury than he ever stood before, I'm willing to take oath. The temptation to slug him and slug him hard came near getting the best of me. But I refrained, for the simple reason that I did not yet fathom his game; and I wished to do so before we came to forthright loggerheads.

I could not well flare up without betraying the fact that I knew more than I was supposed to know. Not that it mattered greatly. Still, I felt that my lawyer friend was not so keen on the expedition unless he had good reason. He didn't want to meet Bob Kenny. I had long since been convinced of that. He was, however, mightily anxious to get the man located, or rather to be perfectly sure of his death. So I kept my hands off him. Only letting him know that I didn't relish that snapping performance.

"What the devil's your idea in that?" I demanded roughly. "I don't much like things being jerked out of my hands that way."

"My dear fellow," he said coolly, smiling, "I was a trifle abrupt, perhaps. But I'll explain presently. I—ah—merely destroyed the picture to—ah—avoid possible complications. Let me have the book."

For answer to that request I put the book in my pocket. He stared and his grizzled eyebrows drew together a trifle. But I continued the disagreeable task of pawing over Kenny's remains in search of further corroboration; though the Lord knows I needed no more myself. Perrin seemed to be pretty well satisfied, too. I expect he had a minute description of Robert Aldous on his own person. I know he examined the poor bones as carefully as did I; appearing to notice likewise the very marks which I had unobtrusively looked for.

I found Kenny's watch tucked in the small pocket at the waistband of his overalls, and that ended my looking. Truth to tell, I half sickened over the job, and was glad to stop at that. With what was already found, and the clear tracing of his movements from the time he left his wife to the spot where he lay, his death was a matter easily proven to the complete satisfaction of any judge or jury.

The question which straightaway arose in my mind was whether Mr. Hamilton Perrin wished to establish or conceal this—to myself and May Aldous, and little Miss Goldenhair—important fact. Whereupon I "began to take soundings," to speak in a nautical manner. Which, on the whole, applies rather aptly, for Mr. Hamilton Perrin was a deep one, and no mistake.

"Well," said I, turning the discolored sheet of canvas over that horridly suggestive heap of bones, "if you had any business to talk over with Bob Kenny it looks as if it would have to wait till you meet in whichever place the gods consigned him to."

Perrin chuckled. The idea seemed to amuse him in some way.

"Very neat indeed," he murmured.

"Have you learned all you wanted to know?" I asked. "What next?"

"Why—ah—I suppose the next thing is to get back to our original starting point, and consider the incident closed," he said placidly.

"Leaving this," I pointed to the canvas, "just as we found it?"

"I presume so," he made answer. "What else should be done? The man is dead, and that settles it so far as I can see."

"Perhaps," I observed. "Still, I don't like the idea of leaving what there is of him in this God-forsaken place. I don't know what your relations with him may have been, but he was a friend of mine."

Perrin looked at me. I thought I detected a trace of uneasiness in the stare.

"Pshaw!" he asserted. "He'll rest just as well here as under a marble tombstone. Let him lie."

"No," said I. "It's a trifling matter maybe, but I have a notion he would like to be planted where dead men usually sleep—in a white man's burying ground. I think I'll take these bones along."

"Now, my dear fellow," he expostulated, and let some of his temper creep into the tone—and into his little eyes, "that's a decent sentiment, one that does you credit, I'll admit. But, after all, it's pure sentiment. There's no logical reason why we should carry that ghastly burden several hundred miles. In fact, it's absurd."

"There's no logical reason why we shouldn't," I persisted. "At least none that I know of. The burden will be on a pack horse and not on your shoulders, nor will it delay our return one iota—if that's what you're afraid of."

"It is rank foolishness," he told me brusquely. "I must insist that things be left as they are. Kindly recollect, Grover, that I hired you to trace Kenny—not to indulge in maudlin sentimentality over his remains, or perform funeral services which are totally unnecessary. Pile the stones over them, and let us be out of here."

"You can insist all you want to," I flung back angrily. "You'll have a sweet time on your hands if you try stopping me."

With that I pulled the canvas aside, and, spreading it flat on the ground, laid hold of the skeleton. Perrin stood by silent while I folded leg and arm bones up, thus reducing it to a size I could wrap and carry—but his red face went purple. For once I'd shaken his impassive front.

He could do nothing to prevent me—much as the proceeding evidently went against his grain—short of physically enforcing his orders, and I don't think he was anxious to try that at the moment. I dare say my own color rose a bit. I know I was quite ready to lock horns with him if he went any further.

However, he kept mum. When I finished folding the canvas I had a bundle eighteen inches wide and three feet long. The weight of it was next to nothing—the bony framework of even a sizable man is light enough once stripped of the fleshy covering. And when Philip and I had piled the scattered rocks over the nameless one that was left, I picked up the bundle and started for the upper end of the flat without a word to Perrin.

Baronne, in moccasins, easily beat us when it came to hill climbing; and it was a beast of a climb up that notch. Halfway, I sat down to get my wind. Perrin came puffing up in a minute or two and seated himself likewise. I saw him look with extreme disfavor upon my grisly burden.

"See here, Grover," he broke out presently, "a man doesn't undertake a task like that just for a sentimental idea. What's the object?"

"A man doesn't undertake the job of bucking several hundred miles of wilderness to find out if a certain individual is dead or not just for a sentimental purpose," I retorted. "What's *your* object?"

He ruminated on that for a space. Then he tried a new tack.

"I may as well be frank," he declared naïvely, "and admit that I'm not doing this of my own volition. The sum and substance of the matter is that Kenny's relatives commissioned me to look him up quietly—quietly, you understand. I suppose you know well enough that Kenny was—ah—wild; a young man of uncertain temper. That little difficulty which you assisted him out of was not the first scrape he managed to get into, nor the most mysterious by any means. To speak candidly, now that he's dead, he was a pretty bad lot. I don't mind telling you this, now that he is no longer a factor—ah—in the consideration of my clients.

"The long and short of it is that Kenny's relatives would much prefer to let a sleeping dog lie—pardon the expression. They do not wish their peace and good name to be clouded by any stirring up of his past. Of course, he being defunct, there can be no such things as a disagreeable prosecution for his past offenses—but there could easily be a lot of exceedingly disagreeable publicity if you persist in taking his remains, even say, to Edmonton.

"My commission was simply to learn where he was, if alive, or to procure definite proof of his death. So that I should greatly prefer to have you drop the matter—and the—ah—skeleton—right here. It was my intention to remember you substantially at the end of this trip; for your very capable services. In fact, I'm prepared to pay handsomely if you will wipe all recollection of this expedition from your memory in the future."

Now, I knew he was lying like a politician in campaign time, and May's remark about the Aldous estate remaining indefinitely in his hands so long as Bob did not turn up and his death could not be proven gave me a clue to his little scheme. Once Mr. Hamilton Perrin was absolutely sure that Bob Kenny could not turn up unexpectedly and demand an accounting, why, of course, he could have a high old time on the proceeds of a judicious use of estate funds—if he had not been turning a few tricks of that sort already.

One gets to know the caliber of a man pretty well when one sleeps under the same blanket and practically eats

out of the same pot with him for a period of two months. I was quite prepared to believe that Mr. Hamilton Perrin would loot, embezzle, steal, and defraud with a good heart widows, orphans, and strong men alike, when it was a question of catering to his own desires—such as they were.

Thinking so, I experienced a sincere contempt for the gentleman and all his works. I could not think of him as anything but a sneaking coward; an individual devoid of real nerve. Which was a bad mistake on my part, and betrayed mighty poor judgment of men. But he was a type I'd never had dealings with before.

Notwithstanding this opinion, I deemed it best to humor him if I could do so without sacrificing my determination, which was neither more nor less than to take out Kenny's remains and the accompanying evidence necessary to prove May free, and give Miss Goldenhair that portion of her father's heritage to which she was rightfully entitled. So I temporized. A moment's thought showed me clearly what I *could* do, once I reached Christmas House and got the factor's ear.

"Well, since you put it that way," I replied, "I suppose we can as well bury this at the post. Maybe that would be best. But don't think that your fear of publicity is going to make me drop what there is of the poor devil in a coulee as if he were an animal, because I won't."

"Certainly not," he agreed, quite affable again. "I appreciate your feeling for a man you knew and liked. Bury the—ah—remains at Christmas House, by all means, and we'll mark Robert Kenny off the books. I'm relying on you not to talk, once you are home again. A few words, carelessly dropped, you know, might lead to a great deal of annoyance for his relatives."

"I'm not in the habit of gabbling all I know. I'm a trifle like yourself in one respect; I believe in action rather than words," I told him ironically, not caring much if he grasped the double meaning.

"Excellent philosophy, too," he agreed—and then we breasted the hill once more, to where Philip lay smoking in the shade of a big rock.

The next essay brought us to our waiting horses. It lacked but a short time of noon. So we built a fire, cooked a meal, and smoked a pipe before lashing the packs fast and taking the back trail.

CHAPTER VIII.

We buried the canvas bundle without opening it the same afternoon we reached Christmas House, on a little rise behind the post where a dozen other mounds were inclosed by a rude log fence. After that we returned to the house of the factor, and lounged in the shade, for we were pledged to a forty-eight-hour stay.

"What's your hurry, what's your hurry?" Grimes had said. "It's not once in four months I see a white man's face. Bide over a day or two—a week would be better. 'Twill do your nags good. You'll make better time for the rest."

It was easy enough to fall in with Perrin's longing to forego the monotonous riding through everlasting woods, the mosquitoes, and kindred hardships of the trail, for a brief spell. I had no idea of rushing pell-mell from Christmas House, in any case; though I took care to give Perrin the impression that I was chafing to be home and looking after my cattle.

I had a few matters of business to transact at the post myself, business which I had no idea of letting him get wind of. He had accomplished what he set out to accomplish, and was now resting more or less securely on his achievements; whereas I had but begun.

I did not wish him to have an inkling of my purpose, for something of the same reason that caused him to keep a veil drawn over his own; with this difference—he was a good bit afraid of my learning something that would lead to complications for him, were I minded to trade on my knowledge; while I

despised him and went busily about laying a snare for his feet out of pure animosity against his underground methods. When I thought of milady May grinding day after day in stuffy telegraph offices, while that fat old hound juggled with a fortune that was legally hers—well, I took a most unchristian satisfaction in getting ready to throw him good and hard.

The gentleman, however, was very watchful, without appearing so; a part of his natural caution, very likely, but it seemed that he had made up his mind that I would bear watching. I could not get a word with Grimes, but he was at my elbow, or at least within earshot. In fact, whether by accident or design—largely by design, I fancied—he made it his business to have himself a third party to all conversation from the time we arose till we turned in at night. I couldn't seem to find opportunity to lay my wires properly. I had a story for Grimes' ear, and a few requests to make of him, which I did not care to shout from the housetop.

Eventually on an evening when Perrin and I were at the verge of sleep—we each had a bunk in the same room—I got calmly out of the blankets, and in bare feet and trousers bore straight for the wing in which the factor slept.

He let me in at my rap, and bade me be seated when I had assured him that I was not in want of a drink, or tobacco, or anything so much as a quiet word with him.

And then, in lowered tones, lest Mr. Hamilton Perrin should have his ear to the latch hole, I began with the girl at Bullhead Junction and told my story to the end.

"Hm-mm," said he, applying a meditative thumb and forefinger to his chin. He was no waster of words, Factor Grimes.

"Now," I averred, "I have no legal or direct evidence that my lawyer friend actually has done or contemplates any crookedness. But I leave it to you if his actions don't lay him open to a good deal of suspicion?"

He smiled, but reserved opinion.

"At the same time," I continued, "I can't tell what he really has up his sleeve. One sure thing, he's aching to keep dark about Kenny's death, and that's pretty near enough for me. Another, he may be able to put some sort of spoke in my wheel if I go blatantly ahead with what I've started to do. I'd prefer to have him believe everything is lovely, until I get to civilization with what I know—on the principle of moving along the line of least resistance."

"What, then, do you propose to do?" Grimes finally asked.

"First and most important," I put it as briefly as possible, "is to get Kenny's skeleton where the courts can refer to it as exhibit A. I hadn't the least idea of letting that burial be the last of it. To do that I want you to have Philip Baronne dig it up and bring it to Edmonton—after Perrin and I are well away from here. Also, if you can lay hands on Louis Pellieu, who was with Baronne when the men were seen alive, and Hungry Boy, the Indian who helped him cover them up when they found them dead, it would be well to send them along. They will be needed as witnesses, you understand. Whatever their time is worth I will pay gladly. I imagine Mr. Hamilton Perrin will make a fight over the case, if there is a chance, and for the girl's sake I don't want to leave a loophole."

"The untrustworthy executor!" Grimes murmured. "Why, it's as old as property itself, that turn of affairs. To be sure, I'll lend a hand. Even if you're mistaken, there will be no harm done. I wouldn't like to connive at malicious double dealing, you know."

"Nor I," I assured. "But if I have the matter straight the double dealing is the other way. If Perrin is square the proof of Kenny's death will not harm him—and it's necessary to prove that before I and May can marry, you see. Which is vastly more to me than the money side of it. Though I'm going to see that Mr. Hamilton Perrin plays fair in that respect also."

"Well," he said, "I'll give Baronne a leave of absence. And I can start Louis and the Indian out inside two weeks. They're on the Liard, but I can

get word to them. Had you not better speak a word to Baronne yourself tonight—you say Perrin seems a bit distrustful of you?"

"He certainly does," I declared. "I suppose he wonders why I took high-handed possession of Kenny's trinkets. Still, I don't think he has an idea of what I'm really driving at. Yes, I'd talk it over with Philip this minute, if I knew where to find him."

"Slip on these moccasins." He tossed me a pair, and thrust his own feet into slippers. "I'll go with you to his cabin."

Philip was snoring like a distant sawmill when the factor unceremoniously walked in on him. He came out of his slumber promptly enough, and sat up in bed running his fingers through a shock of tousled black hair, while I explained what I wanted of him. Grimes gave him to understand that he was at my service, and he nodded comprehension at my words.

"Sure, dat job she'll be no treeck 'tall for me," he asserted. "Ah'm breeng dem bone on Edmonton easee. Ah'm for com' dere, an' look for you on w'at you call Hotel San' Chon, eh? All right."

I had the eight hundred dollars which I had painstakingly provided at the start, still in a money belt about my middle. Slipping out three twenty-dollar gold pieces I handed them to Philip.

"That's in case of accidents by the way," I remarked. "I don't suppose I'll get another word with you before I leave. It's simple, anyway. You ought to get in a few days behind us. Don't talk to any one about what you're bringing out. Come straight to the St. John and ask for Wash Grover. I'll be there."

That settled, we returned to the factor's house, and I went to my room. Perrin's eyes peered wakefully at me over the blanket edge. But he had nothing to say. I turned in, quite pleased with myself and my evening's work.

Only after my head touched the pillow did it occur to me that Mr. Hamilton Perrin, if he had been minded to, could have acquired some surprising information by the simple process of going through my vest, which article of clothing I had carelessly left lying on the bed when I went out—for one pocket held a letter from May. I had wired a word to her en route, and she had written to Edmonton in time to catch me the day we started North. I even ran my fingers into the pocket to make sure, and felt the envelope where it should be. Perhaps it was unwise to carry such an epistle, under the circumstances, but like any other fool of a man in the same emotional state, I kept it handy to sneak off and read every day or so, when I got lonesome. However, it was there, and undisturbed.

Bob's memo book, and his watch, I kept on my person at all times, having taken opportunity to stow them in my money belt, as I fully expected that if Perrin ever got his hands on them by any means whatsoever they would be very much missing. The silver-mounted pistol I had arranged with Grimes to be brought by Philip.

And so in the midst of tangled threads of thought I fell asleep. It was our last night at the post. We had planned to be on the wing at noon of the next day.

CHAPTER IX.

A week out from Christmas House we made a noon camp in a tiny glade where a muskeg spring seeped to a hollow and good grass abounded. Altogether the opening was less than an acre, a pale-green spot in the darker-hued forest. To the east stood the spruce, shoulder to shoulder. Westward opened a vista of poplar and quaking aspen, fairly thick but not so dense that the summer sun failed to touch the earth here and there, bringing patches of grass to view.

From a confidence born of many days on trail we had formed the habit of turning loose all our horses at the noonday halt. They could feed better than within the limits of a picket line. This day, however, two of them formed a partnership for purposes of exploration. For some mysterious equine rea-

son they bore gradually to the west, snipping a few blades of grass here and there as they went. I saw them graze out of sight behind a clump of poplars, but thought nothing of it, since the other two fed within fifty feet. I saw them again just as I finished eating, stepping briskly along, a good three hundred yards away.

"Those two plugs have got the traveling fever," said I to Perrin. "I'll bring them back while you pack up this truck."

He nodded, being still at his dinner, and I set out on a dogtrot. Right beyond the first nodding cluster of aspens a sudden breeze flicked out of the dead hot air, and struck me squarely in the face. Likewise it caught the open front of my vest and flapped the two sides vigorously. It passed and the shivering leaves settled to their unruffled calm. In the meantime I had seen my nags again, standing heads up, ears pricked forward, looking earnestly toward the backbone of the Rockies.

I kept my steady trot to turn them before they increased the distance. A few steps farther a subconscious feeling of loss caused me to finger my vest pocket. It was empty. Looking back, I saw the white gleam of the envelope —May's letter—and one or two other bits of paper, against the grass, where the whirlwind had flirted them as I ran. I swung on my heel to get them. Then an innate dislike for needless steps arrested the impulse. I could pick them up as I returned with the horses. So I went on.

The two geldings waited till my hand was outstretched for the short lead rope, snuffing at God knows what, with their heads up and nostrils distended. Then they flipped their heels playfully in the air, in a transport of joyful freedom, and tore away still farther from camp. Once more they stopped, and once more repeated this ecstatic defiance of mere man afoot. Whereat I turned philosophically back, not being of a mind to run my legs off when I could saddle one of the other horses and overhaul the truants at ease.

I suppose Mr. Hamilton Perrin strolled out from camp to see whether or not I had captured the strays. He had an ever-present apprehension of losing horses. At any rate he had followed in my wake—and my first glimpse was of him standing by a tree holding the sheets of May's letter in one hand and the envelope in the other.

My attempt to turn the horses had taken me in something of a curve, so that I approached camp from a slightly different angle. Hence he did not see me, for there was considerable brush between us, and I hunched down out of sight to watch him before he looked in that direction. I smiled to myself, thinking how easily I had let the fat drop in the fire.

He had probably seen enough of May Aldous' handwriting to recognize it at a glance. By his attitude I judged that he had but finished reading. Which guess was immediately confirmed. He carefully folded the letter, slid it into the envelope, and replaced it on the ground—glancing around nervously as he did so. Then he listened carefully for a second or two.

After that he picked up, looked over, and laid down again the other papers, one by one, keeping a sharp eye out for me in the meantime. During this I made a cat-footed shortening of the distance between us, and got close enough to read his thoughts almost.

The face of him was a study. He looked at the letter on the ground, toward camp, and lastly all about him, as if he expected something to happen at once. Then the man actually bared his teeth like a snarling dog. I could hear his snort of anger. He spat out a crisp oath in a thoroughly venomous tone, and stalked off toward camp with his hands doubled into fists, as if he expected to plant a healthy smash on some one's jaw.

When he was well gone from the spot, I walked out of hiding, picked up my papers, and stowed them away. Then I turned campward at a leisurely gait. The horses were still to be caught, and also I was a trifle curious to see with what sort of face Mr. Ham-

ilton Perrin would meet me. I took my time about getting there, just to ease his mind of any idea that I might have seen him at his infernal prying.

But he was surely an actor, gifted with a great deal more self-control than I could credit to myself. He was quite matter-of-fact, masking what must have been his real feelings with commonplaces, going about the business of packing up as if no disturbing element had entered into our relations.

I saddled and brought back the runaways after a brief chase. We lashed on the packs and struck the trail once more, I riding in the lead cogitating upon what new turn affairs might take. So far as I could see, I had Mr. Perrin where he could do nothing but grin and take his medicine, if there were any to be taken. And I smiled as I rode.

Somewhere near three in the afternoon we came to a stream both wide and deep, though falling short of the dignity of a river, as rivers go in the North. It had not fully receded from the flood which comes with the thawing of snow in the mountains. Where we looked upon it there was small chance of crossing in safety. The bank pitched sharp to the roily current. In a pinch I would have tackled any sort of water, but as it seemed to widen downstream, we drew back to seek farther along for a better take-off and landing, since swim we must.

Even where it widened, the slope sheered too steeply for comfort. So we rode on to the rim of a bank where the land ran high. I stopped my horse and got off to stand on the edge and see if it were worth while to go on below rather than face upstream for a better crossing.

The current of many spring floods had eaten into the foot of the bank till it was little short of perpendicular. The channel swirled right at its foot. On the opposite side a brushy lowland raised a few feet above high-water mark. I took it all in at a glance. A man on foot could scramble down to the bottom farther along, and get back under the bank on which we stood. There he would be reduced to jumping into the swiftest water from a ledge. I doubted if we could get down our horses, though the other side offered a good landing, even if we were swept well downstream.

"I think we'd better——"

What I started to say remained unspoken. Perrin had been standing beside me, peering over the rim at the ledge and the turbid water that lapped against it. Perhaps the thirty-odd-feet drop and the oily twist of the current suggested the feasibility of what he undertook. At any rate, he stepped back as I opened my mouth to speak, and cut my sentence short with a lusty blow on the back of my head. What sort of weapon he laid hold of I do not know. It may have been the revolver he carried in his pocket, a handy chunk of wood, or even a rock. Certainly it was not his fist—for it laid my scalp open a good two inches. And I pitched head foremost over the flood-shorn wall, ten thousand skyrockets blazing against a black void before my eyes.

I don't know how I escaped complete unconsciousness, unless it be laid to a phenomenally hard skull. But I did so escape. To be sure I was stunned, so that I felt little of the fearful bumps I received en route. But miss complete knockout I did, landing on the aforementioned ledge in a daze, out of which I collected myself as rapidly as any normal being could.

In a moment or two my head cleared. My body was, alas, still too much the victim of shock to answer the urge of nerves, motor or otherwise. Had I been run down by a loaded wagon I could not have been more effectually put out of commission. And when Perrin's face showed over the rim above, glaring malignantly at me, I could do nothing but lie supine, one large paralyzing ache. My first thought was to play possum, which I did to the best of my ability.

Mr. Hamilton Perrin had sloughed his repression, as men of his caliber are apt to do in the heat of action. If ever the devil looked out of a man's face, it was then. I knew there would

be no mercy from that gentleman, since he had me foul. Wherefore I conquered the ungodly numbness of my limbs, and let my fingers stray stealthily toward my gun.

With the rest of my luck, that also had forsaken me, jarred I suppose from its place in that knock-down fall. At least it was not in its scabbard, nor could I see it on the ledge, looking from the tail of my eye. And at that moment Perrin saw that I was not quite done for, and made ready to finish me in a workmanlike manner. His hand slid over the edge, and he fired, drawing his lips back as he had done when reading the letter.

The bullet struck a foot wide, kicking flakes of sandstone into my face. The involuntary heave of my body at the report and the spatter of soft stone took me over the ledge plump into the sweeping current. It was the only chance I could see; to swim or be shot.

I had got my wind pretty well, and the shock of the cold water gave me a momentary access of strength. I held my breath until my head and lungs were like to burst, before I came up. The swiftness of the stream, coupled with what feeble strokes I made, bore me forty yards along. I rolled as I broke water, and lay flaccid, floating face up, and little save my face showing. He was waiting for me, sighting down with the pistol over his forearm, and I would gladly have dived again, but I was too far spent. I could only float and take chances, thanking my stars that Mr. Hamilton Perrin was a poor shot with a pistol, and apparently had not the wit to lay hold of a rifle, which he could have held so much steadier.

His next shot fell short. Another overreached me. The third splashed water in my face, and tried my endurance to the limit. If he had come close again, I should have had to spoil the illusion of a floating corpse. But he emptied the cylinder without scoring aught but wide misses. And by that time I was too far out of range for any but a real gun man to touch me.

Not that he failed to do his best. He left the horses and followed along the bank, peppering spitefully. I dare say he thought one or two bullets found the mark. A little way farther a deep gully angling in stopped him. He was probably quite sure I would never bother him again, for I floated motionless with the stream, turning a bit now and then, like a well-played fish.

He pocketed his revolver, and stood watching, till I floated out of sight around the bend, and I would like to bet that he was not half so pleased to think he had settled my case, as I was to get beyond reach of a lucky shot from his gun.

When the bend hid me from his view I paddled painfully for the south shore, laid hold of a willow, and dragged myself trembling from the stream. Back in the thicket I found a place with long grass, and the sun beating warmly upon it. And there I crumpled up, sore, bleeding, aching beyond words, with no strength left for anything but a feeble twinge of anger.

CHAPTER X.

I could not, had I wished to with all my anger, arise and go upstream to fall upon that gray-haired rascal when he crossed, which I supposed he would do at once. I could not muster strength, even, to seek secure hiding in case he did cross and come prowling along shore to see if by any chance my carcass had beached. The hot sun banished the chill of the icy water, and I felt no discomfort from my sodden clothes. But before long my right arm and thigh stiffened, till I was next thing to helpless. That thirty or forty-foot fall, broken only by sundry projections of hard clay from the cliff, had bruised me fearfully. No bones were broken, however, and I was grateful for that. So, since I had no choice, I made the best of a bad matter, and lying there I presently fell asleep, or became unconscious—I do not know which.

When I came to myself again the sun's lower rim rested on the distant mountains, and the mosquitoes were

taking their evening meal off my person undisturbed. Which fact aroused in me a desire for food—and also raised a pretty question as to satisfying that desire.

Weapons I had none, except a short-bladed knife. My matches, of the sulphur-headed variety, had been thoroughly soaked. Though I had laid them on a rock in the sun they were not yet dry enough to strike; and while I had nothing to cook and slight prospect of getting anything soon, I needed a smudge to protect me from those voracious winged pests, and a fire for the night. Without bedding or dry clothes, sleeping out is an uncomfortable stunt in that part of the world any time in the year.

It was torture to move, but move I must and did. The matches would only sputter. I tried the Indian method of rubbing dry sticks to get a spark, and gave it up as being no job for a man with black and blue and abraded patches all over him, and a sprained arm and leg to boot.

As a last resort I remembered a hunter's expedient which I had heard of but never tried. My cartridge belt was well stocked with forty-fives. I gouged a bullet from its seat, dampened the powder slightly, mixed it with some punk from a rotten tree, and made shift with knife blade and a rock to explode the primer of the empty cartridge into the little wad of dry stuff. I succeeded brilliantly—in scorching my fingers. The scheme worked, however. A spark glowed in the powder and punk, a spark which I hastened to blow into a sputtering blaze, and so solved one problem.

Having a fire, my stomach protested earnestly against a supperless state. Therefore with a string garnered from my pockets, I rigged a rabbit snare or two, though with scant hope of catching anything. The bush of the North is alive with cottontails, and on a snow runway a man can snare them by the dozen, but in the summer it is quite a different matter. There were trout in the stream, I knew, but I was well aware that no self-respecting trout would take any primitive lure I could fabricate, with the water at flood stage.

It was not such a hardship to miss a meal, even with a poor outlook for ensuing meals, if I had been myself. But I could only hobble about in direst pain. Motion of any sort racked me from head to heel. When a man is in that condition he needs food, and needs it badly. I dried my lone sack of tobacco, however, and the sheaf of cigarette papers, by the fire, and made that do. After that I made myself a bed of branches and moss in the smoke, where the mosquitoes came not. Thus I got through the first night, and though morning found me still stiff and aching fearsomely, I could feel a little better than before, and so replenished the fire and sallied forth in search of a breakfast.

My set snares proved unavailing. Berries there were none; the season was too early. But by the grace of the woodland gods I struck a slough on the far side of the bottom land, which the wild duck had picked for a breeding ground, and I robbed nests right and left, even contriving to knock over a mother spoonbill as she fluttered off her eggs. And that solved another problem. I began to see myself rid of the exceeding soreness of my limbs and trailing Mr. Hamilon Perrin by aid of the welcome duck eggs and meat. At least I could easily satisfy the hunger which irritated and weakened me—what of the blood I had lost and the shock of the blow and fall.

It was but a few hundred yards from the stream, and so presently I was back at the smoldering fire cooking my eggs and duck. With a full stomach, I felt more equal to taking things as they came. Still, I was in no shape to travel. The few rods I walked, or rather limped, in search of food, convinced me of that. But I did bestir myself to go up the cañon and find if Perrin had succeeded in crossing. I found his tracks at no great distance. From which successful coping with a difficult situation I concluded that he would doubtless be able to fare gayly on toward Edmonton; perhaps not so

rapidly as I would have led him, but making good time nevertheless—time which I could not hope to discount afoot, compelled as I would be to forage diligently by the way.

Mr. Hamilton Perrin was surely proving himself a much more capable individual than I'd given him credit for, and I began to realize that he had picked up a good deal of trail wisdom. For a tenderfoot he did well. I wished I had been a little more wary of him, instead of contemptuously underestimating his potentiality for active devilment.

Sizing him up day by day, I did not dream he had it in him to knock me on the head and buck the trail alone. Crying over the spilled milk, however, would not fill my jug again. Since I was compelled to submit to my hurts, I did so with what grace I could muster, thankful that the supply of duck eggs bade fair to hold out indefinitely.

As a matter of fact, I lay on that lowland, fighting mosquitoes and subsisting on a diet which speedily grew distasteful, for three long days. By that time my bruised hip limbered sufficiently to let me walk without unbearable pangs shooting through it. So on the fourth morning I set out, a goodly supply of roast eggs stowed in the lining of my vest, and two birds which I killed with a stick—they were quite tame in that unhunted land—slung over one shoulder.

I felt much better, mentally as well as physically, so long as I kept my mind off the wearisome distance between me and Peace River Landing, where lay the nearest Hudson's Bay post I knew. Others were closer at hand, but I had only a vague idea of their location, hence I figured that my best plan was to keep straight on, and consoled myself for the certain hardships by the ultimate dumfounding of Mr. Hamilton Perrin.

I knew he would come to no grief until I appeared. He could easily explain my absence, if any one thought to ask a question. Many a man goes into the North with a partner and comes out alone. It isn't uncommon enough to excite wonder. The North levies a high toll upon those who traverse its far-spread solitudes, as witness Bob Kenny's party and their herd. Perrin's turn would come when I got at him.

The magnitude of distance weighed on me like a load of original sin during the next day or two. Peace River and Edmonton seemed to lie beyond the outermost rim of the world when I took note of my crawling pace and the weariness which settled over me long before nightfall. I had no weapon but my pocketknife, as I mentioned once. The getting of food was an ever-present thorn in my side. My attempts at rabbit snaring proved fruitless. Deer halted within easy range and stared fearlessly at me, as if they knew I was unarmed. I carried a club like my cave-dwelling forebears, and a half dozen round stones in my pocket, on the chance of coming to close quarters with some beast I could kill. But the ptarmigan seemed to be all in hiding, I did not find another duck pond, and the bigger game mocked me from afar. Had not the creeks swarmed with fish, I should have made scant progress, for getting my meat in the mode primitive would have left me no time for straightforward journeying. As it was, I spent a good third of each day sneaking upon shallow pools, armed with a wooden fish spear of crude design. Thus I fed myself, and in a manner shortened the trail a few miles each day.

It was drear work, put the best face on it I could. Half the time I was desperately hungry; all the time I was footsore and weary, smarting with mosquito stings, denied decent rest by night, denied even the solace of tobacco once my small sack was emptied. The few matches I husbanded. Each day I cursed Perrin a little more bitterly.

Wherefore, the sight of a fresh moccasin track as I came down the bank of a little creek one day, brought me up standing. It bore south, and it was fresh. I followed, and came to a drenched camp fire not three hours

old. Whether white man, half-breed, or Indian, he fared in my direction, and I hurried my lagging footsteps to overtake him, if it were possible. An empty stomach is an ill thing upon which to travel fast, but I think I broke some pedestrian records that day, though my last meal, and that only two ten-inch trout, had been at noon of the day before.

And at dusk I topped a gentle rise of woodland and saw the gleam of a fire among the trees ahead.

CHAPTER XI.

Fifty yards from the fire I caught the man's face limned in the glow, and yelped a greeting at the sight—"yelped" is the proper term, for I was so near complete exhaustion that my voice refused to function in the natural way.

Baronne stood up, peering into the dark, and the next minute I was shaking his brown fist.

"Bagosh, you're sure look toff," he exclaimed in a tone of wonder. "Where you hoss an' de par'ner?"

"Gone where the woodbine twineth," I grunted ironically. Philip looked mystified.

"I'm as empty as a bear when he comes out in the spring," I went on, being ravenously hungry and my appetite whetted at sight of a hind quarter of fresh-killed venison strung from a branch. "Cut me off a slab or two of that meat, and I'll lay it on the coals while we're talking. And pass me your tobacco, old boy, before I spin any yarn."

While the meat sizzled and water bubbled in a tin pot, I told him in language he could understand what had befallen. Before I finished my narrative I was negotiating slices of deer meat broiled to a king's taste, accompanied by a cup of strong tea and a goodly hunk of bannock left over from Baronne's supper. With my story told and unable to eat more, I rolled another smoke and settled back in heavenly comfort.

"W'at she's gon' do, dat ol' feller, now she's theenk you're cash een?" Philip broke into my meditations. "She's mak' bad break for try to keel you, Ah'm theenk. Dem mount' police she's feex heem for dat, eh?"

"Why, I suppose he'll go right on to Edmonton and say that I got drowned or a bear chewed me up, or something of the sort that's always happening back here," said I. "Leave it to me. I'll fix him good and plenty. We'll just keep on and not say a word when we get there, if he's gone—which he probably will be. I know where to find him. With you, and Louis Pellieu, and Hungry Boy to tell what you know, I'll make him feel worse than if the police got after him. That skeleton—you've got it, all right?"

Baronne grinned, and pointed to a bundle against a tree.

"Ah'm got heem, you bet," he answered. "Firs' tam, bagosh, Ah'm heet de long trail weet dead man's bone een de pack. Ah'm not sleep moch dem firs' night. Now Ah'm geet use for heem, an' not mind."

"Well," said I drowsily—what of the cheerful blaze and the first full meal in a week, "I'd pack a dozen skeletons on my back to get even with that red-muzzled hound. We'll get there by and by. I'd a heap rather travel with a dead man than with Mr. Hamilton Perrin, of Lucknow, Ontario. You can gamble your silver on that."

I fell asleep almost before I finished speaking, so great was my weariness. Baronne had cut a lot of spruce boughs and piled them by the fire for his own bed. It was upon these I rested, and when I keeled over, the breed evidently cut more boughs, and, laying them beside me, spread his one blanket over the two of us. At least I was so protected when I next awakened. Daylight's cloak of rose-tinted gray unfolded over the woods, and Baronne sat up at my elbow, rubbing the sleep from his eyes.

By sunup we had eaten a hearty breakfast and were reapportioning Philip's pack. His grub supply was no great burden. He carried perhaps twenty pounds of flour to make ban-

nocks. For the rest he had salt, pepper, and tea. His rifle accounted for meat from day to day, according to his needs. The canvas bundle I shouldered, and the grub—by far the heaviest load—Philip took upon his own broad back.

From that point we bore steadily southward. No untoward incident broke the monotony of daily tramping. We slept, ate, made twenty or thirty miles, as the case might be; ate, slept, and walked again. Thus in due season we struck the O-kay-wan Trail, a narrow Indian pathway which runs down to the little settlement at Peace River Landing. Once there we laid down our packs, and took our ease in real chairs on the factor's porch.

"Losh, man," said the bearded Scot in charge of the company store, "I thocht ye were dead. Yon red-faced lad ye went up wi' telled me sorrowfully that ye drooned at the crossin' o' Loon Creek."

I laughed. That was exactly the story I expected to hear. It did not suit my purpose to raise a howl at that stage of the game. So I made light of the matter, for all the old Scot scented some sort of trouble. Men in the North don't abandon their partners and lie about the manner of it, unless there is a serious rift in the lute.

"Well, you see he was mistaken," I replied. "He gave me up for a goner all right. I don't say he mightn't have made a little more sure, before he pulled out. But I'm on deck, as you see. What's the chance to get a team and spring wagon to take Baronne and me to Edmonton?"

The chance was good. By an ironical twist of things we rode to the Gateway of the North behind a pair of the very horses I had started with—for Mr. Hamilton Perrin had sold the outfit for a song upon reaching the landing, and hired a team to take him on, even as we did. At that he was but three days in the lead. If he lingered, or aught delayed him, I stood a show of coming upon the gentleman in Edmonton.

I was not particular as to when and where I rounded him up, but I had an idea of letting him run clear to the end of his rope, just to see how hard he would throw himself. Anyway, we tarried only the night at Peace River and in the cool morning bore away across the more open country between the Peace and the Saskatchewan.

But our evil bird was flown. He had registered at the St. John, telling there the same story he had told at the Landing, and tarried twenty-four hours before taking the train—probably to allay suspicion, which might have arisen if he had departed in unseemly haste.

We were standing in the office of the St. John talking to the proprietor, the grime of our long journey still upon us, when Philip broke out with an amazed: *"Sacré!* Bagosh!" he exploded. "Dat Eenjun an' Louis Pellieu she's beat us. She's come from on de Liard Reever, an' beat us een. Well, w'at you theenk dat?"

He pointed excitedly through a window to where two men stood on a corner, two short, thick-bodied fellows, one in beaded buckskin, the other in a short blanket coat and fringed leggings. Baronne ran to the door and hailed them. The man in buckskin threw up a hand, and his white teeth flashed in a broad smile as he jabbered something to his more stolid companion. Then the two came grinning to the hotel door.

"W'at you theenk dat?" Philip repeated, after a minute of conversation in their common tongue. "Dey're go down on Slav' Lak' an' ride de steambo't an' paddle de canoe clear on At'basca Landeeng, w'ile we're walk de leg off. Bagosh!"

The manner of their coming concerned me little, since they were at hand, but it was a sad blow to Philip's pride that they had beaten him on the trip when he had a shorter road and ten days' start over them. I left him talking it over, and got a bath, a shave, and haircut, and donned respectable clothing. After which I took the trio to a restaurant and fed them the first meal they had not cooked for them-

selves in many a day. The rest of that afternoon and part of the next day I spent in preparing to upset Mr. Hamilton Perrin's apple cart.

First I definitely established the identity of the three men with whom Bob Kenny went North. The tall, thin one, "weet face on heem lak' a eagle," was a stranger blown in from nowhere, Hanson by name. The short, fat pair were local men, brothers, John and Mark Shaules. Kenny, who had wintered at Edmonton under the alias of Barker, made the fourth.

All this I had learned, in a measure, before starting out with Perrin. Now I armed myself with affidavits and depositions. There were men in Edmonton who could swear positively to Kenny's appearance, the date of his coming, and the time and manner of his departure. When I had made the rounds, the chain was complete, not lacking a link. May's detective agency had trailed him up to his leaving the Cypress country; I had tabbed every movement from that day to his death. I had living witnesses and other unimpeachable evidence to mark every step he took. I thumbed over the sheets, with their imposing seals, and smiled to myself.

That done, I put Louis Pellieu and Hungry Boy in charge of the St. John manager, with the understanding that when I wired for them he would place the two aboard a train with tickets to whatever point I designated. If Mr. Perrin was minded to fight May's just claim, I felt equal to giving him a stomach full of fighting. I felt sure that any court in the land would order a final accounting and distribution after hearing what those sons of the North had to say. There would no longer be any question of a missing heir—or, what meant more to me, and to May, a dragging of affairs marital through the mill of divorce. It resolved itself into simply winding up the affairs of Robert Aldous, deceased.

Baronne I took with me. Once through with Edmonton, I longed to be whither my heart craved, where a welcome waited whether I came afoot or a-horseback, empty-handed, or the bearer of treasure trove. A letter three weeks in the St. John mail box told me that. And so mid-afternoon of a sweltering day Philip and I crossed the big river and swung aboard the train at Strathcona station. Purposely I resisted the temptation to wire my coming. I wanted to surprise her.

The drumming car wheels sang the song of speed to me, and I doubt if another man in those coaches was half so glad of that music as I. For me it was a journey triumphal, for all the grisly relic stowed carelessly in the baggage car. I don't think I considered that phase of it much. I had packed those bones five hundred odd miles on my back, and had come to regard them as merely an important factor in the case—subject to no sentimental considerations whatever.

CHAPTER XII.

It was dark when we slid creaking and hissing to a stop at Bullhead Junction, and my heart thumped scandalously against my ribs for no reason in the world except the sight of a brown head bent over a freight sheet in the yellow flare of a lamp. Miss Goldenhair, clad in a white nightie, perched on a stool behind her mother, the small hands folded demurely in her lap, watching the train lights and the passing of men before the office windows.

But May sat with face averted from the bustle outside, the palm of one hand concealing from me all save the suggestion of a profile. She was tired, I could tell by the weary pose, and lonely—perhaps.

I choked for a second, and stood where I was, back a few feet from the streaming window lights, Baronne patiently at my elbow. I wanted the crowd to be about its business when I went in; not that any great gathering flocked there—only a few sojourners in Bullhead Junction whose sole and daily diversion lay in meeting trains and watching them depart. Luckily none of those who straggled past in their aimless promenade recognized me.

The train, after the fashion of a through passenger, tarried only a brief time. Then it was slipping away eastward, and the Junctionites streamed over toward town in the wake of the man with the mail sack. When the last one vanished into the gloom, and the familiar prairie stillness accentuated the clacking telegraph sounders, Baronne and I walked into the waiting room.

The ticket window stood halfway up. I pushed it clear to the top, framing my face in the opening. She turned her head a trifle, but the motion was purely mechanical. She did not see me. Her look was the look of one who looks from force of habit, but does not see with any degree of recognition.

"A penny for your thoughts, little woman," I hailed her, and I think my voice must have wobbled.

She gasped. For an instant she seemed to shrink as if in the grip of some terrible fear. Every vestige of color went out of her cheeks, her eyes dilated. Withal she spoke no word, only stared at me strangely, holding fast to the arms of her chair with both hands.

"May," I cried, "what's the matter?"

She half rose at that, and sank back again. One hand went to her throat, and she drooped sidewise, with a sudden limbering of her tense body. Whereat, I sprang to the door, found it locked, and burst it clear of its hinges by a savage heave of my shoulder. She had slipped to the floor, and the baby girl was whimpering on her stool when I got in.

Luckily youth reacts quickly against that odd malady we call "nerves," and milady was both young and strong. A glass of water and a minute of chafing brought her back to normal. Baronne helped, but when her eyelids flicked open I turned him out.

"What scared you, sweetheart?" I asked. Her trembling fingers clung to my arm as if she thought I would vanish like a phantom.

"You," she whispered. "I thought it was a ghost. My heart just stopped short."

"A ghost!" I muttered in perplexity. "A ghost? Why, what——"

"I thought you were drowned. Perrin—he——"

I saw light then, quickly enough.

"Ah," said I wrathfully, "Mr. Hamilton Perrin has been very industrious indeed. But I'm not, you see. He'll find that I'm the most disturbing spook in the Northwest before he's much older. The confounded skunk! I'm a pretty substantial apparition, don't you think?"

"Oh," she cried, "you don't know how glad I am. I've been next thing to crazy for the last twenty-four hours. Only for Bessie——"

I filled in that eloquent pause with a caress. Then I drew a chair up close by her, coaxed Miss Goldenhair to my knee, and made a demand for enlightenment.

"How did you get word that I'd very conveniently drowned?"

"Perrin wrote," she replied, "a long letter. It was bad enough; but when he said you had drowned——"

She shuddered, and put out her hand as if to ward off something.

"Did he think you had really drowned?" she asked earnestly. "Or was it a lie, pure and simple—still, what would he gain by telling a story like that?"

"I guess he was pretty sure I'd never contradict it in person," I observed dryly, "seeing that he watched me go downstream like a water-logged boat—after splitting the back of my head open, and taking a shot or two at me for good measure. Say, just let me have a look at that letter, will you?"

She fished it out of a pigeonhole by the ticket stand and gave it over without comment. Bessie was already nodding, so I let milady lay her in the little bed while I went through that precious fabrication. If I had not just had a startling demonstration of how seriously she had taken it, I could have laughed. As it was, the farther I read the hotter I grew.

This is the way he declared himself:

DEAR MRS. ALDOUS: It is with considerable regret that I address you, inasmuch as

I am compelled to act in a manner which will scarcely meet with your approval. I do not feel that I can do otherwise, however, in justice to myself.

Briefly, it is this: I should be glad to rid myself of the burden of executorship. To do so it is necessary that Mr. Aldous come forward and take over the estate. Knowing that you also are interested I have been at considerable pains to locate him. Without success, as it happens, except to learn that he may possibly be in the Yukon gold fields. I hope by means of correspondence to get in touch with him eventually. I cannot afford to devote more of my time and personal resources to this end, for reasons which I explained to you quite fully when you last brought up the subject. That is, under the law, I have no warrant to use estate funds for such outlay. Mr. Aldous can hold me responsible for every dollar expended, no matter if expended in an honest endeavor to apprise him of his good fortune.

The allowance which you have hitherto received has been paid out of my own pocket. The estate, you understand, is solely and absolutely bequeathed to Mr. Aldous. You are not legally entitled to any income from same, except at his hands—or as an heir in case of his death. You have no claim whatsoever, and as I have been at considerable expense in attempting to trace him, expense which Mr. Aldous may very properly refuse to reimburse when he does put in an appearance, it is with extreme regret that I find myself unable to continue the monthly remittance.

I have just returned from an extended Northern trip, following up a clue which promised to lead me to your husband, but which in fact led to nothing whatever. I had as a guide a ranchman named Grover, of the country near your station. Grover spoke of having met you, and as he personally knew Mr. Aldous under one of the assumed names he affected, I took him into my confidence. Grover unfortunately lost his life on the return trip; being drowned while attempting to ford a badly swollen stream. It was a great pity. He was a fine fellow.

I should have stopped off to see you, but am returning in haste to attend to business which has been neglected during my long absence.

Regretting that I am compelled to take this step in the matter of your allowance, and hoping that Mr. Aldous may soon be heard from, I remain,

Respectfully yours,
HAMILTON PERRIN.

He had signed the screed with a flourish. The postmark on the envelope showed that it had been mailed en route. I could imagine him chuckling to himself over that bit of work. And I could also imagine how he would chuckle on the other side of his face and switch to forthright malediction if he knew that I was still in the flesh, and perusing that artistically concocted pack of lies.

"So," I remarked absently, "that's the idea, eh? Make it appear that Bob is liable to show up any time. Well, say, girl, you don't seem much interested in what I found up North?"

That was a fact. She hadn't betrayed the slightest curiosity as to how the quest had gone. Now she turned from the baby's crib, and coming up beside me put her hands on my shoulder and looked earnestly into my face.

"I haven't thought much about it," she murmured. "Just to see you back again—when I thought—I didn't dream he'd lie about a thing like that. I couldn't see any purpose. I took it for gospel."

"Well, you can get your traveling clothes ready," said I, after a minute. "I have not only satisfied myself that you're a bona-fide widow, but I've got all the proofs necessary to establish the fact in court."

"Bob did go North, and perish, then?" she asked.

"He did," I answered soberly. "He died like a dog, in a snow bank. And I guess the poor devil had a kindly thought for you, from the signs."

I told her of the picture incident, and showed her the memorandum book with its random pencilings. There was one little reference to her. She looked over it unmoved.

"I'm sorry," she breathed softly. "And still I can't be a hypocrite. He was all for himself, always. Nobody else mattered much, when his own desires were concerned. We drifted apart long ago, just as if we had been nothing more than acquaintances. I suffered too much humiliation at his hands to feel badly—and Bessie never knew him. So I can't feel much but glad to know he doesn't stand between you and me. As for the money, Bessie's his child, and she's entitled to that much from him. You don't think I'm cold-blooded to feel glad I'm free of him, do you, Wash?"

"My dear, if you were sorrowing over him, where would I come in?" I asked. "No. It's part of the game of life, this dying in a far country. He took his chance, like any other man, and he lost out. His loss is my gain. And that's all there is to it."

"Oh, that Perrin!" she burst out angrily. "What he has made me feel since I read that letter. What does the man mean?"

"He means to keep his fingers on the boodle bag of Robert Aldous, deceased, just as long as he can do so by any old method whatsoever," I responded. "Never mind. I'll attend to Mr. Perrin's case. He knows Bob is dead as well as I do. He was with me when we found the place. That was why he knocked me on the head—to keep it dark, you see."

"He tried to kill you," she stormed. "Are you going to have him arrested for that?"

"No, dear," I returned. "I'm going to do nothing of the sort. I can't think of any worse punishment for a man of his type than to pull him up short in his tracks. The chances are he has gone through his little wad, or he wouldn't be so keen to keep hold of this money, so that he can use it as he pleases. If we hold him up for every copper, and show him up for what he is, he'll find himself back in his little pettifogging round after a brief splurge of affluence—and I guess that will put a pretty bad crimp in Mr. Perrin. But let's drop him. I'll attend to him when the time comes. Let's get our own affairs in shape."

"How?" she inquired wonderingly. "What——"

"You don't suppose we're going to conduct this affair at long range, do you?" I remonstrated. "You can throw up this job for a starter. You don't need it any more."

"Oh, but I can't do that just like you'd take off your coat," she protested.

"No? Why not?" I demanded. "The C. P. R. hasn't got a life mortgage on your services, surely?"

"Of course not," she laughed. "But I'll have to stay here till they send another operator—and that sometimes takes quite a while."

"Hm-mm," I considered this phase of feminine devotion to duty for a moment. "You're in charge of the office, aren't you? Well, I want three first-class tickets to Lucknow, Ontario.

"Sure," I insisted, hauling out my wallet, when she stood regarding me with a doubtful look. "I mean it. Get busy with the ticket business, little woman."

Still wearing a dubious expression, she made ready the long strips, and I solemnly paid for the same.

"Now," said I, when I had pocketed the transportation, "I've got a message for you to send."

It took five minutes, and the destruction of several telegraph blanks, but eventually I set down what I wanted. And then I handed it over for her to read.

DIVISION SUPERINTENDENT, Medicine Hat.
Send relief operator on next train. Have jumped the job. Will not work after tonight. MAY ALDOUS,
Bullhead Junction.

"You wire that where it will do the most good," I commanded. "And pack your duds to catch the passenger tomorrow forenoon. We're going east, to beard the lion in his den. *Sabe?* You, and I, and the kid—to say nothing of Baronne."

She hung back reluctantly for a minute or two, half laughing, and telling me that I was altogether too sudden, but when I took her gently by the shoulders and pushed her over to the key, she gave in and rattled it off. Then she laughed back with a sigh of relief.

"Wheeler will be burning the line with all sorts of impolite things by morning," she prophesied. "It takes nerve to quit short off like that, on this division."

"If you dropped dead, they'd have to fill your place pretty quick," I suggested pointedly. "And if they took a notion to fire you, I don't think you'd get much notice."

"That's true enough," she admitted. "But I've been a slave to the sounders

so long—well, it's done. I hope I never have to touch a key again. I've got a lot to thank you for, you big, wild cow-puncher. What could I have done alone?"

"Amen to the first part," said I earnestly—and then we sat there, saying little, just glad to be together again, until Baronne, becoming impatient, roused us suddenly.

He cleared his throat with a loud "Ahem," and I looked over my shoulder to see his round, dark face grinning through the open ticket window.

"You gon' mak' camp here, M'sieu Grovaire?" he inquired facetiously. "Eef so, Ah'm-theenk 'bout unrol de blanket an' tak' sleep, me, bagosh, yes!"

CHAPTER XIII.

We stole quietly into Perrin's home town, the three of us, and took a hack to a hotel. It was early, the cool dawn of a summer morning, and as I sat in the lobby waiting for the breakfast hour, the sun crept into the street and a yellow shaft of it lighted the window on the second floor of the opposite block. Upon two wide panes a name in gilt letters blazoned conspicuously:

A. M. COTTER, BARRISTER.

Which called to mind the fact that I had passed the stage where my relations with Mr. Hamilton Perrin would be upon the law of club-and-fang basis. The legal machinery of the land must be invoked, and I stood in need of reliable counsel. The clerk pored over a morning paper. I bethought myself of learning from him how Mr. Cotter, barrister, stood in the community. Trust a hotel clerk in a small town to have such information on tap—a functionary of that sort is usually a compendium of local knowledge. He has to be; it's one of the tools of his trade. So I approached the desk.

"What sort of a lawyer is A. M. Cotter?" I asked abruptly.

He laid down his paper and surveyed me affably.

"Best in the burg—in his particular field," he declared. "Old resident. Honest; for a lawyer. Up to date; big practice; handles nothing but civil cases. His brother is district judge. A. M. could have been, if he'd wanted to."

That sounded promising.

"Do you know a lawyer named Hamilton Perrin?" I went on. "How does he stack up locally?"

"Well," he replied guardedly, "Mr. Perrin practices law here—but he ain't quite in Cotter's class. In fact, his shingle isn't displayed very prominently these days. He's putting in most of his time looking after old John Aldous' estate; executor, y' know."

The clerk's gaze wandered to the open register where May's name was scrawled across the page. We had come in together, and I suppose he saw that we were not strangers to each other. I could see that he was rather curious, but he was too well trained to let it get the best of him, and I was not volunteering information so early in the game.

"The Aldous family is pretty well known hereabout, eh?" I remarked.

"Was," he corrected. "They're scattered and died off mostly. Uncle John was a local character; the last of the name here, I think, though there are some blood relations of a different name—Perrin was a forty-second cousin, or something. The old man's money was left to a nephew out West somewhere, but he has never turned up."

He looked at me as if he thought perhaps I might be the missing heir, and I let it go at that, resuming my seat. Presently breakfast was called. Baronne and I took up the march to the dining room. May, train weary, had lain down in her room, and so we ate breakfast without her. Later, when the street waked to its daily traffic, and office doors began to swing, I took Philip and crossed to have a talk with Mr. A. M. Cotter.

He proved to be a quick, nervously energetic, undersized man, a little inclined to be brusque, until I gave him a hint of what sort of problem he

might be called upon to deal with. Then he rubbed his hands together, readjusted his spectacles, and hitched his chair a trifle closer to mine.

"Ah," he purred, "this promises to be interesting. Yes, indeed. Go on, Mr.—er—Grover."

"The farther you go," said I, "the more interesting it's apt to become. You've heard enough to know whether it's worth your while to take charge of this case and see it through for Mrs. Aldous. Will you?"

"Certainly," he assured. "Now get right down to fundamentals. Give me the facts without any frills."

I did so, to the best of my ability, and the gentleman's pointed white beard wagged sagaciously when I finished.

"Hm-mm," he grunted. "I shouldn't have thought Perrin would dare go so far. However—perfectly simple."

"What is?" I asked.

"The case," he returned, "if you have all this proof to present."

"I've got it, all right," I declared emphatically. "Some of it here in my pocket. What is the quickest way to get it over with?"

"Well"—he pursed up his lips and spoke deliberately—"there are two methods of procedure. We can depose him from the executorship; I think you have sufficient proof of bad faith on his part to warrant that. Or—we can go into court with your proof of Robert Aldous' death, demand an immediate distribution to his direct heirs, which are, of course, Mrs. Aldous and the child—as Aldous apparently made no will."

"Naturally," I put in, "since he went over the divide rather suddenly—and didn't know he had anything to bequeath. Well, you act in whatever way will be most effective."

"Then I shall take steps to make him wind up the estate," he decided. "Court is in session, so I can act immediately, and it happens that the docket is fairly clean. Have the evidence turned over to me as soon as possible."

I had everything with me but Bob's remains, which were yet in the baggage room at the station. I brought the articles forth from the various pockets about my person.

"Suppose," I ventured, as I laid them on the desk before him, "he has looted the estate?"

"Hardly likely yet," Cotter demurred. "Of course in the light of your statements he may have done almost anything. However, if he has been pilfering, you can rest assured he shall answer for it.

"One moment—er—Mr. Grover," he jerked out, after he had glanced at the Edmonton depositions and the bits of personal property I had taken from Bob's body. "It strikes me that we may be able to avoid a legal fight. These things"—motioning to the gun and the memorandum book before him—"should exercise considerable moral effect on our friend Perrin. We might browbeat him into expediting things somewhat. Suppose I make an appointment with him here, and have Mrs. Aldous present? You and this man will be in the next room. I shall declare Aldous dead, and confront him with these things. Then you can step in. The shock of seeing you when he imagines you—er—eliminated, should heighten a desire to avoid trouble. You understand? If we can frighten him into taking the initiative in a settlement, we save time, money, and irritation. Not that he has a leg to stand on, but——"

"Good," I enthused. "I wouldn't like anything better than to see his face when he finds that I'm still in the ring."

"Very well," the lawyer said crisply. "Queen's Hotel, eh? I'll keep you posted over the phone. Good morning. *Good* morning."

We stepped across the street to our abiding place, Baronne and I, somewhat hurriedly, lest Mr. Hamilton should be early abroad and catch sight of us. From a room on the upper floor we sat with our feet on a window sill, smoking good cigars and making comparisons between Lucknow, with its paved streets and substantial stone buildings, and certain little Western towns we both knew. Thus we killed

time until ten o'clock. Then I sent a maid to wake May and bid her be ready to meet the enemy—and reduce him to a negligible factor. Twenty minutes later a bell boy called me to the telephone.

"Come to the office," Cotter called briefly. "Perrin will be here at a quarter to eleven."

I hung up the receiver and darted upstairs to May's room.

"Get on your togs and hurry across to the office of A. M. Cotter, barrister," I cried jubilantly. "We're going to pull Perrin's eyeteeth in the next half hour."

I blew her a kiss, called Baronne and made short work of getting over the way. May and Bessie came more sedately within five minutes. I introduced Cotter, and after a minute's conversation he ushered Baronne and myself into a small room opening directly off his main office. The door between he left ajar, and through a small bare spot in the ground-glass panel I could see without being seen. And presently in walked Mr. Hamilton Perrin, resplendent in tall hat, fashionable morning coat, and trousers carefully creased. He was a trifle taken aback at sight of May, but he put a good face on it, and came forward, bowing and smiling pleasantly, one fat, smooth hand extended. He got a chilly reception from that stout-hearted lady, however. She kept her seat, and looked straight through him.

"Have a chair, Mr. Perrin," Cotter invited. "I have a rather important matter to discuss with you."

Perrin seated himself, with another sidelong glance at May. He could not quite understand either her presence or her attitude, I imagine.

"Well," he said shortly, "what is it? I'm in something of a hurry."

"I shan't detain you greatly," Cotter observed in ironic vein. "You are the executor, under the will, of the John Aldous estate, I believe?"

"I am," Perrin grunted. "I should think it hardly necessary for you to ask me that."

"Very well," Cotter snapped. "You are not acting in good faith. You are purposely delaying settlement of the estate under the flimsy pretext that Robert Aldous, heir to this estate, cannot be found."

"If that is your important matter," Perrin remarked insolently, "you are merely wasting your time and my own. I don't care to discuss the matter. Your statements are an insult."

He rose and picked up his hat and gloves as he spoke, favoring Cotter with a sneering smile.

"Sit down, sir!" Cotter's beard pointed aggressively forward. "Mrs. Aldous is my client. She demands a settlement. She is entitled to a widow's portion. Robert Aldous is dead—and you, Mr. Perrin, are well aware of that fact."

"I?" Perrin's tone of astonishment was probably not altogether simulated; it must have been a jolt to have that shot at him point-blank.

"Yes, you." Cotter's voice hardened as if he were addressing a convicted criminal instead of a fellow practitioner. "I cannot, of course, say positively as to your object—but I can draw a very discreditable inference. We are prepared to prove in court that Aldous is dead. The evidence is quite complete. Hence it may be wisdom on your part to refrain from making it necessary for us to put you in a rather disagreeable position."

"I am sorry that you have been so misled," Perrin returned stiffly. "I have been at considerable pains to get track of Robert Aldous. To the best of my belief he is very much alive, and at present somewhere in the Yukon gold fields—as I wrote Mrs. Aldous not long since."

"Then you are going to try to bluff it out, are you?" Cotter demanded sternly. "Perhaps you may recognize these things."

He whipped an outspread newspaper off his desk and exposed the silver-mounted, pearl-handled Colt, in its worn cartridge belt, the dirt-stained, molded memorandum, and Bob's tarnished watch. Mr. Hamilton Perrin blanched a shade at that, but he was a

cool hand, a master of devious ways. He collected himself instantly, and shook his head.

"No, I cannot say that I do," he spoke evenly. "I am sorry that Mrs. Aldous is resorting to such——"

"Oh, but you are a barefaced liar, if ever one lived!" May set Bessie down off her knee and faced him angrily. "To stand there and talk like that after you've done everything—even to attempt murder."

His eyes widened, and by all the signs and tokens it was my turn to get in the game—since May had hinted at the worst spoke in his wheel. He seemed inclined to stand them off, but I did not think he would try that with me. So I murmured to Baronne: "Keep an eye on him," and stepped into the room.

Perrin faced about at my step, and cringed like a thief caught in a chicken house.

"Well, old boy," I jeered. "You see you didn't do such a good job, after all."

He knew the fireworks were close at hand, but for all that when I did not immediately begin hostilities he mustered courage for a last brazen defiance.

"I fail to see——" he began sneeringly. But I cut him off short.

"You'll get over your blindness in a moment. May, you go out into the anteroom for a little while," I said quietly. "And please ask your stenographer to step out also, Mr. Cotter. I'm going to do some plain talking to this gentleman."

There was a brief period of silent glaring while the two girls passed out. May hung reluctant in the doorway, but I signaled her impatiently, and she closed the door. Then I turned on Perrin.

"You're at the end of your rope," I told him. "It's up to you whether you want to dodge a good, hard fall. Will you get a move on and wind up this estate business according to Mr. Cotter's instructions, or not?"

"I'll see you damned first!" he burst out, blazing with futile rage at being so trapped—and at the words I did what I'd been aching for a chance to do: smashed him square on his thick-lipped, sensuous mouth.

I struck too quickly to put any great force into the blow. Nevertheless it keeled him over against the wall. He straightened, snarling wolfishly, and grabbed a chair. I was waiting for some such move, and I punched him so hard and fast that he no more than hooked his fingers over the chair than he was jarred loose. And with that I got a grip on his collar, coat, shirt, and all, and yanked and slugged him with my free hand till he crossed both arms over his face and crumpled to his knees whimpering—while Philip danced about us in unholy glee at the ruction, and Barrister Cotter stood amazed, his spectacles in one hand and a pencil poised in the other, apparently uncertain whether he should indorse my action or call in the police.

I jerked Perrin to his feet and slammed him into a chair—first making sure he harbored no deadly weapon. Then I stood over him and laid down the law in short-syllabled words, somewhat mixed with profanity. All the belligerence and evasion were clean knocked out of him.

"Yes, yes," he agreed tremulously. "I'll be guided by whatever Mr. Cotter says. You've hurt me, Grover; you've hurt me badly."

"I'll hurt you a lot worse," I stormed—though inwardly I was laughing, "if you ever try any more of this high and mighty monkey business. I've got you just where I want you, and you've got to step wide and handsome."

I stood back and surveyed him contemptuously. He was considerably damaged, all right, but I doubted if he were half so badly hurt as I, that time he left me afoot and alone in the wilderness to subsist on wild-duck eggs and hobble my way to civilization. I still owed him more than I could repay with my fists. But I felt momentarily appeased when I noted his messed-up features. With one eye near closed, his nether lip split, his nose swollen out

of all natural proportion, and divers other marks of battle upon his countenance, to say nothing of his ripped coat and shirt, I had done pretty well in that minute and a half, more or less.

"Now you take him in hand, Cotter," said I. "I think you'll find him more amenable to reason."

The old lawyer adjusted his spectacles, and after a nervous clearing of his throat began coldly telling Mr. Perrin just what to do and to do it quickly. And the upshot of that one-sided conversation was that the two of them climbed into a hack and started for the courthouse to make application for a hearing, at which the Aldous estate would be put in a fair way for settlement and distribution. Baronne and I were to wait until Cotter returned.

When Perrin had washed some few of the stains off him and departed with Cotter by a different entrance, May and the stenographer came in. The apprehensive glances they sent around the room amused Philip greatly.

"It's all over but the last loud yell of triumph," I told May. "He wilted, and Cotter is spurring him to a quick wind-up."

"I thought I heard you fighting, in here," May declared. "You hit him, didn't you? I wish I were a man, I'd pound him myself—the cold-blooded scoundrel."

"I can do all the fighting for both of us," said I lightly. "Anyway, I think the last blow has been struck in this row."

We waited a little, till the inaction grew monotonous, and then May took Bessie and went back to the hotel. Baronne got restless and strayed out to roam the streets. I sat there, curious to know the outcome of that hack ride. And presently Cotter stumped upstairs, and came in. He put his hat on the desk, chucked his gloves into the crown, and seating himself fiddled with his cuffs, glancing meanwhile at me in a peculiar way.

"Well," I inquired at length, "did you get him started on the right road? Did he stay meek?"

"Remarkably meek," Cotter returned tersely. "Yes, things will move now. There will be a hearing to-morrow some time. We shall present proof of Aldous' death, and pray that the estate be distributed to his heirs. Perrin will render a final accounting, and a new administrator will be appointed. It will be very simple."

"Who'll the new administrator be?" I asked. I wondered idly if the next one would be no more reliable than Perrin.

Cotter eyed me sharply for a few seconds.

"Well," he drawled, "unless I am very much mistaken you are the logical candidate. Nothing like keeping these matters in the family, eh?"

I fear I blushed at the inference, for he chuckled and playfully shook a desiccated forefinger at me.

"Ah, it takes a young man, broad across the shoulders, to catch the ladies' eye," said he, winking solemnly, as if it were an unaccustomed effort. "But I say, you know, you handled poor Perrin shockingly."

"Shockingly?" I broke out. "If you'd seen what he did to me! Look at the back of my head"—I bent down—"I'll carry the scar as long as I live. He got off *lucky*, if you want to know—lucky that I didn't get my hands on him before he got out of the Northwest. There wouldn't have been need of legal proceedings to depose him."

"Well, well," he observed slowly. "You do things differently in the West. It's a strong man's country, I dare say."

"I've wired for those other two witnesses to come on," said I, to switch the subject. "When will you want to see me again?"

"Oh, to-morrow, some time," he answered. "I'll phone. I scarcely think further evidence is needed. Still, it may be as well to have those men at hand."

"All right, then."

I got up to go—and paused in the doorway. There was another more personal matter upon which I desired a word of advice.

"Say, Mr. Cotter," I stammered out,

"would it prejudice Mrs. Aldous' and her baby's claim if we—if she were—if she got married again right away?"

He whirled in his pivot chair and aimed that lean forefinger at me again, peering facetiously at me over the rim of his glasses.

"No, young man, it will not—certainly not," he barked. "Get married, and good luck to you both. Now be off with you."

So there I was. I knew better than to waste effort pleading with milady. She would invent a thousand excuses for delay. Whereat, remembering the manner of her resigning from Bullhead station, I wended my way to the courthouse and transacted a little business with the functionary who issues marriage licenses. And armed with that, I went back to the hotel to fight it out with her.

Which, to a certain degree, brings me to the end of my yarn. Only one thing happened that was not strictly according to program; and I cannot say that I was greatly astonished. When, in the course of the next forty-eight hours, it became necessary to send a bailiff to bring Mr. Hamilton Perrin into court, it transpired that he had skipped rather than face the music. Incidentally he took with him a trifling sum belonging to the Aldous estate—nothing, however, to what he might have made away with, had he been permitted further opportunity.

Nor did diligent seeking on the part of the authorities ever uncover the direction of his flitting. I am in hopes that some day I shall accidentally run across him and repay a little more interest on my debt of stale duck eggs and weary miles of trudging with the bones of a dead man on my back.

So, in the end, Miss Goldenhair came into a goodly heritage, enough to make her independent of the big herds I some day hope to accumulate. And as milady May seems quite satisfied with the general outcome, I cannot see that any more remains to be said.

POLITENESS PAYS

REPRESENTATIVE HAY, of Virginia, tells a story showing that politeness always pays in the country. The hero of the tale is Ben Davis, the man who defeated President Madison for election to the Virginia House of Delegates after Madison had left the White House.

Old Davis, who seldom wore a coat, was sitting on a rail fence on the roadside in Greene County one morning when a young man, dressed in dapper fashion and evidently from the city, passed by.

"Good morning," said Davis, with the proverbial Virginia politeness.

To this the stranger paid no attention. In a few minutes, however, he came to a fork in the roads and was evidently in doubt which way he should go. He retraced his steps to where Davis still sat on the fence and asked him with great politeness if he could tell him which way led to Stanardsville. Davis made no reply.

"Will you please tell me," the young man repeated, "which road I take to get to Stanardsville?"

"You can," said Davis stolidly, "take any damn road you please."

A CONSERVER OF RELIGION

Gifford Pinchot, who was discharged by President Taft from his post as chief forester of the United States, is a zealous member of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew. When he was in Washington regularly, he taught a Sunday-school class in a small Episcopalian church.

The Cast-Off

By Charles E. Van Loan

Author of "The Crab," "A Job for the Pitcher," Etc.

Walloping pitchers are rare birds. The man who can wrap a ball around a batter's neck and also hit a .340 clip from one end of the season to the other is of the extraordinary type. That's the "Cast-off." But one thing he lacked—a sense of humor

HE is not playing baseball now; occasionally the name of G. Audubon Spencer appears in magazines devoted to scientific pursuits, and he has been known to address women's clubs upon protective coloring as applied to lepidoptera. G. Audubon Spencer has a small but highly interested following; Slug Hardy was frantically worshiped by a few hundred thousand perspiring gentlemen who wouldn't know what lepidoptera meant and wouldn't care very much either. Yet G. Audubon and Slug are one and the same person.

He called himself Hardy when he decided to become a professional baseball player, and he became a professional baseball player because he needed the money. There was a time when he played the national game for love. He began as the star pitcher of a high-school nine, and when he was seventeen years of age he was whitewashing semi-pro organizations and letting real leaguers down with two and three hits. Then he went to a university where he made baseball history, and was in a fair way to graduate with some letters after his name when Spencer, Senior, took it into his head to die. He left a large family and a larger mortgage, and young G. Audubon packed his traps and disappeared, to turn up a thousand miles away as Slug Hardy, the star pitcher of a professional team.

He was a sensation for two seasons, partly because he could wrap a ball around a batter's neck and partly because he could hit at a .340 clip from one end of the season to the other, and walloping pitchers are rare birds.

At twenty Hardy was a veteran pitcher and beginning to feel the effect of too much work. He would have been an exploded phenomenon at twenty-one but for his foresight. He knew that there comes a time to every pitcher when the strongest wing weakens and the former star is left out on the hill with nothing but a glove and a prayer, so he prepared himself for a new position.

Day after day "Dusty" Moles, his chum, put in his spare time hitting up "fungoes" to the outfield, and Hardy galloped after them. When Slug was ready to stop pitching he was a seasoned outfielder, and it was as an outfielder that he joined the Blue Sox and entered the big league.

There was only one thing the matter with Slug. He was born without a sense of humor. On the other hand, John Henry Patrick Callahan, "Jaggs" Callahan of blessed memory, had too much humor. That was where the trouble started.

Jaggs was not the worst fellow in the world, and not the best, either. His humor, largely of the slapstick variety, often palled upon his teammates, but they endured him because he could pitch a baseball in seven different languages. His best joke was the one he saved up for whiskered yokels at country stations. When the train

stopped, Jaggs would spy out a bucolic loafer with long whiskers and beckon him to approach, engaging him in close conversation about the town and the price of real estate. Still talking when the train began to move, Jaggs would lean far out of the window, entangle his iron fingers in the rustic's beard, and hold on for dear life. The sight of the outraged citizen, racing along and screaming with pain and rage, was one which never failed to fill Jaggs with pleasure. Sometimes the pitcher lost his grip. Sometimes the yokel lost his lace curtains, but whatever happened it was a very fine joke.

The first encounter between Jaggs and Hardy shows what a small thing may put a ball player "in wrong" with his associates. When a player begins by getting "in bad" he nearly always gets out worse. Hardy got out worse.

Jaggs selected the big, red-faced, white-eyebrowed stranger as the softest thing among the recruits, and scraped an acquaintance with him. One evening on the hotel porch at the training camp, Jaggs told his famous story of the goat and the tin can. Hardy, silent and thoughtful by nature, overlooked the improbability of the incident, and concerned himself solely with the baseball problem involved.

"Y'see, it was like this," said Jaggs. "I was playin' right field that day, an' this blame' goat kept edgin' in an' edgin' in—*you* know how them country fair ball grounds are; no fences or nothin'—and he got in my way. I chased him, an' he picked up the can he was nibblin' at and started to run toward the diamond. Just then Maginniss hits a line drive right down over first, an' the ball *hit square in the can an' stuck!* Maginniss tried to make a home run, but I got him."

"Ball rolled out?" suggested Hardy.

"Nope," said Jaggs. "Had to git it out with a can opener afterward. I just picked up Mister Goat, run to the home plate, an' touched the goat's foot to the rubber. *Zing!* The umps allows as how Maginniss is out!"

There was a deep silence, and then Hardy broke into speech.

"Why, the rule says——"

That settled it. The new man was a farmer or worse. Hardy was amazed when he saw the papers from the home town. The war correspondents seized upon the incident of the goat and the tin can, and made it good for anywhere from two sticks to a whole column. Hardy was angry. He reproved one of the reporters.

"But I didn't *say* all that stuff!" he persisted. "It makes me—well, ridiculous. It isn't fair!"

Then that reporter told his fellow workers that the new outfielder was a rube who objected to press notices and had threatened to punch the head of any correspondent who took his name lightly between the bars of his typewriter.

Hardy was already "in bad" with several members of the team; he was now "in bad" with the press.

"If he drops dead on the field, we'll print ten lines about him," said the press gentlemen. "Otherwise, nix!"

So it happened that all the home fans knew about Hardy was the incident of the goat and the tin can. It was not an auspicious introduction.

The season opened on the home grounds, and Hardy, playing a sun field to which he was unaccustomed, dropped a fly ball which he should have "caught in his teeth," as Callahan reminded him, and the error lost the game. This was unfortunate, for a certain clique of leather-lunged rooters on the right-field bleachers decided that the new man would not do.

If a dozen baseball fans select a fixed idea and their voices hold out, they can do almost anything. By the end of the first game two hundred "regulars" were after the new right fielder, and it pleased them to see that Hardy resented their efforts.

Any ball player knows what it means to have enemies in the home town. He expects to get the worst of it on the road, but when he performs at home he expects loyal support and encouragement. One hundred hostile rooters in the home town can hound a player out of the club, and it has happened

in almost every city in the league, and will happen again so long as performers are susceptible to outside influence.

The constant chorus of "Tin can! Tin can!" got on Hardy's nerves and worried him. Every time the ball was hit in his direction there went up a sarcastic chorus. The boy was unused to this sort of treatment. In the town where he had previously played he had been somewhat of a local deity. A bad cigar had been named after him, and small boys followed him about the streets. He had never been a grandstander, but it is one thing to play ball before a friendly crowd and quite another to do one's best when that best brings only jeers and abuse.

Hardy began to make inexcusable errors. He mislaid his batting eye, and swung wildly at "bad ones." Opposing pitchers quickly diagnosed his case.

"The busher is swinging at 'em," they said.

Overanxious, and fretted until his nerves were raw, Hardy played like a schoolboy, lost his stride entirely, and brought down upon himself the wrath of those stern censors of the press who edit the most interesting page of the paper. The sporting writers began to howl for his release. Hardy wouldn't do, they said, and they said it in headlines.

Wise old Ben Daly, manager of the club and team captain as well, a great infielder in spite of a dash of gray over his temples, tried to put some heart into the recruit.

"You've let the knockers get you going," he said. "Didn't they chase Dillon out of Louisville years ago, and didn't he play three times as well as soon as he struck a new town? There wasn't anything the matter with Dillon, only they got his goat, and they kept it. There isn't anything the matter with you, either. You'll hit your stride one of these days, and show these flannel mouths what a regular outfielder looks like. Buck up, kid!"

Hardy shook his head.

"I don't know what's the matter with me. I go up there to hit, and I can't *see* a ball any more."

"You only think so," soothed Daly. "Don't you think I know a sweet hitter when I see one? Why, I never saw a man show up better in spring training! You're just worried, that's all that ails you. Forget it! You'll get started one of these days."

"Another Rank Counterfeit!" the morning papers howled a few days later.

"These fellows don't want me in this town," said Hardy to the manager. "They never did want me. They've been knocking me from the start. If it hadn't been for that tin-can thing——" and Hardy broke off miserably.

"Tell me the truth," he said. "Are these fellows right about me? Am I too slow for this company?"

Daly swore heartily.

"You've slumped, that's all. If you could only get going once, you wouldn't have any trouble. Quit reading the papers, put some cotton in your ears when you get out there, and play some baseball."

Hardy tried to follow the directions, but met with flat failure. At the end of his first month he was hitting below .140, and the fire had been turned on Daly. Day after day he was hammered for carrying a counterfeit on the pay roll. The manager stood it for two weeks more, and then he did something which he expected to regret.

When the arrangements were completed he walked into Hardy's room at the hotel just as the young man was going to bed.

"You know Catterson?" he asked. "Well, he wants to trade me that lopsided, splayfooted outfielder Harmon for you. The Reds have been a tail-end team for the last four years, but it's a good town to play in, and Catterson treats his men well. If I didn't like you personally, I'd probably send you out to some minor league, but I've got a notion that you'll get into your stride one of these days and—well, what do you say?"

"Anywhere to get away from here," said Hardy bitterly. "I won't forget how decent you have been about this thing, Ben. Most managers would

have kicked me out a month ago. If I can ever do anything for you——"

"Aw, shut up!" said Daly gruffly. "Only when you get going right, don't bust up too many games for us, that's all!"

Hardy tried to smile at the pleasantry, but his heart was too full for words. He had been expecting his release.

Catterson, a square-jawed, red-headed man, met Hardy at the train.

"Hello, youngster!" said he. "Glad to see you. First time I ever skinned Ben Daly in a trade in my life."

"The fellow you traded must have been pretty bad," said Hardy.

"No," said Catterson, grinning. "He was all right from the head up and from the feet down. Feel like going right in this afternoon?"

The Reds gave Hardy a warm welcome. His old chum, Moles, was the shortstop of the club, and he had been doing a little advance work for the recruit. Hardy, dispirited and doubtful of his own ability, scented a new atmosphere as soon as he entered the clubhouse at the park. It was like walking into the heart of a big happy family. By the time he was ready for the field he felt better acquainted with the Reds than he had ever been with the Blue Sox. The Reds had no foolish pride; they had been walloped so hard and so often that they had learned to be philosophical about it. Baseball was more or less of a joke to them and to the whole town.

Hardy was dropped into sixth position in the batting order, and it happened that when he went to bat for the first time two men were on the bases, and the local fans were roaring for a hit.

"Come on, Blondie!" they yelled. "Come on, boy, and give us a hit!"

The welcome warmed the newcomer's heart. "Lightning Bug" Martin, the opposing pitcher, had worked against Hardy before, and held no high opinion of him. He "grooved" the first ball, and Hardy "pulled" it down the first-base line like a flash of light. It was a cracking double, and it drove a brace of runs to the bench, and little Moles screamed himself hoarse.

"Didn't I tell you this bird was a ball player?" he said. "Oh, I guess he can't hit nor nothing! No-o-o! He's perfectly miserable, he is!"

Catterson grinned and looked up in the air. He was wondering what Ben Daly would say when he discovered that the Red discard was a man with a solid ivory skull, mahogany legs, and a glass arm.

The next morning the Blue Sox, on tour, examined the box scores over the cantaloupes and coffee.

"Sweet Jemima!" ejaculated Jaggs Callahan. "What do you know about this? The Goat gets three hits yesterday off Martin! Hey! You s'pose that stiff was laying down on us?"

Daly grunted sarcastically.

"Well," said Jaggs, "I'll bet he don't get three hits in another game this season! He was playin' better'n he knew how yesterday. Just a streak of luck."

It proved to be a long streak, and Jaggs changed his mind when the Blue Sox, swinging around the big circle, dropped in for four games with the meek and lowly Reds. Jaggs pitched the opening game of the series, and Hardy, who had been moved up into the "clean-up" position, buzzed a line drive between Jaggs' shoulder and ear for a neat single.

"Hey, you discard!" roared Jaggs. "What you tryin' to do? Murder somebody?"

Hardy, dodging about off first base, answered with a bellow which amazed every man on the Blue team.

"Get that one in your tin can!" he shouted. "The next time I'm going to hit you in the eye!"

Ben Daly, playing second base, shook his head.

"Full of pepper," he thought to himself. "I ought 'a' kept him, doggone my fool soul!"

The Reds actually broke even on the series, thanks to the heavy stick work of the cast-off. A triple with the bases full sewed up the last game of the series, and Callahan was the victim.

Even "Old Folks," the negro masseur who traveled with the Blue Sox, commented upon the startling change in Hardy's playing.

"Mist' Callahan," said Old Folks, while he was working on what Jaggs referred to as "the old soup bone," the same being the salary arm, "huccome Mist' Hardy to git that triple when the bases wuz densely populated? Accident, mebbe?"

Jaggs grunted and turned over on the slab. Hardy had made five hits off him in two games, which is getting out of accident and into design.

The season progressed, and the happy-go-lucky Reds fought their way to the head of the second division. They made no secret of the fact that they were playing better than they knew how, and first-division teams found them an unexpected stumblingblock. Hardy's terrific hitting was attracting attention, and it began to be broadly hinted that for once Benjamin Franklin Daly had made a mistake. The manager smiled grimly when the papers in his own town began to censure him lightly for allowing such a "sweet hitter" to escape.

As for the Blue Sox fans, they had some trouble in recognizing Hardy for the same man they had once tormented. They roared at him, and reminded him of the goat and the tin can, but Hardy only laughed at them with his thumb at his nose. He was noisy, aggressive, and almost cocky.

"Didn't I say that fellow would make trouble if he ever got into his stride?" asked Daly.

Down the home stretch they went to the close of the season. The Blue Sox were tied up in a driving finish with their old enemies, the Grays. By taking their last three games the Blue Sox could win the pennant, even if the Grays won their last two, which seemed likely, as no pitchers seemed to be able to withstand the terrific onslaught of the heavy end of the Gray batting order.

Curled up in the corner of a Pullman smoking compartment, Hardy read the sporting pages, and turned the situation over in his mind. It was pretty tough luck, he thought, to have to play against a man like Ben Daly in such a crisis. One more game won meant nothing to the Reds. One game lost meant everything to Ben Daly. A pennant meant a bonus for the manager, besides a fat slice of the post-season profits.

Catterson loafed into the smoking compartment, and cast an eye over the headlines of Hardy's paper.

"I wish it was the Grays we had to play," said Catterson. "I like Ben Daly, and I want to see him win out, but—we've got to spill the beans for him if we can. You remember what an awful belch there was two years ago when they said the Pinks laid down to let the Grays win? I never believed there was a word of truth in that, but the scores made it look bad. Cost the Pinks a barrel of money the next season, though. Jee-rusalem! I wish it was any man but Daly!"

Hardy looked out at the flying landscape, one knee doubled up, and his bony shin in his powerful hands. Catterson had been putting his thoughts into words.

"My own brother couldn't have been whiter to me," said the boy at last. "I owe him a lot; more than I can ever repay, but—oh, thunder! You know what I mean. I'll do the right thing if it breaks a leg!"

"Good stuff!" said Catterson. "I hope we drop these three games, but they've got a baseball team to beat. None of that scandal stuff in mine!"

This was the situation when the final series opened on the Blue Sox field.

On the first day the Sox alighted upon Cunningham, the Reds' spitball artist, and hammered him for four runs in the opening inning. The hits were nearly all clean drives. A thousand miles away the Grays were doing the same thing to their opponents.

On the second day the Blue Sox, still hitting like fiends, drove two Red pitchers to the bench, winning by a score of eleven to three. The Grays won their last game by a shut-out score. It was all up to the final game.

Catterson, always an early riser, picked up the morning papers at breakfast on the third day, and thereby ruined his appetite. On every sporting page he found an article telegraphed from his home town. It began:

Are the Reds throwing the pennant to Daly?

The afternoon newspaper men followed hard on the trail. They wanted to know what Manager Catterson had to say, and when he said what was in his mind they found that they could not print it.

"This article mentions Hardy," said one of the reporters. "He's known to be very friendly with Ben Daly, and that may have given rise——"

Catterson exploded with a mighty roar.

"Something will give *you* a rise in about three seconds!" he said. "It will be this number thirteen boot of mine! Now, get out of here!"

Naturally that young man, in a two-column article, pointed out that Catterson flew into a rage when questioned about the statement from his own town. The Hardy incident drew a subhead, and his friendship with Daly was mentioned.

It was an angry team which trotted out for warming-up practice before the last game of the season. Catterson had been reading the riot act to his men.

"What if there ain't a word of truth in it? I know it, and you know it, but if these fellows beat us by a big score this afternoon, we'll never hear the last of it. Let's dig in and show 'em some baseball!"

When it came time to choose the pitchers, Catterson picked Thomas, a tall left-hander with slow, puzzling curves. Ben Daly chose Callahan as the one best bet. The game opened with the Blue Sox keyed up to the breaking strain and the Reds sullen and defiant.

Callahan whipped over a lightning-fast strike on Moles, the first man to face him; a great roar went up from twenty thousand rooters, and eighteen men settled down to the final contest.

Inning after inning slipped by without a score. Thomas, flapping about in his loose-jointed, ungainly fashion, kept dropping his slow twisters across the plate, and the heavy-hitting Sox flubbed them along the ground or popped them into the air. Hardly a ball was hit to the outfield. Thomas had "something on the ball," and, for that matter, so had Jaggs Callahan, who was pitching for his life and the post-season money thrown in. In the fourth inning, after Hardy had doubled to centre, Jaggs fanned two men, retiring the side amid thunders of applause.

The last of the seventh saw the twenty thousand on their feet, "pulling for luck." The luck came, but to the wrong team, for Parrish, of the Sox, slammed a line drive into a lightning double play.

The end of the eighth found players and spectators keyed up to a savage pitch. The Sox were fighting for a pennant and everything which goes with one; the Reds were fighting for their reputations. During the last of the eighth Jaggs abused his teammates like pickpockets.

"What have I got to do for you stiffs?" he growled. "Here I go out and hold these tramps down to three hits for eight innings, and you won't stake me to a single ace! Give me one run and I'll win this game!"

To the end of the eighth inning there had not been an error on either side. Suddenly there came the "break," that strange madness which attacks the best ball players at times and spreads like a contagion until the whole team is involved. There was no warning. Jaggs, pitching like a fury, retired two men, and Moles, known as a dangerous man on the bases, dropped a pretty bunt along the third-base line, catching the infielders asleep.

Callahan started the trouble. He should have been satisfied to let Moles reach first base, but when the big pitcher saw that the third baseman was not even moving on the play, he raced

forward, scooped the ball, and, almost without looking, hurled it across the diamond.

Moles would have beaten a perfect throw; Callahan threw the ball ten feet over the first baseman's head into right field. Moles, rounding the bag like a ghost, scuttled along to second. The Blue Sox right fielder came tearing in, the ball struck the tips of his gloved fingers, and bounded out of his hand, falling ten feet behind him.

Moles, signaled by the coacher on third, crossed second like a rocket, and was almost at third base when the right fielder straightened up and whipped the ball in the general direction of the home plate. He had caught the contagion, and, as the catcher ran back for the wild throw, Moles let out the last link in his stocky little legs, and slid over the plate just as the catcher whipped the ball savagely to Callahan.

Hardy on the bench found himself repeating:

"*We* didn't do it! They beat themselves! They beat themselves!"

Catterson was cursing in a wholehearted fashion; all along the Red bench there was no sign of exultation. High and clear over the muttering in the stands rose the joyful whoop of a lone Red rooter:

"There goes your old pennant! How do you like it?"

A loyal home fan reached over and mashed the offending one's hat down over his eyes, and he lapsed into sudden silence, chuckling to himself and muttering now and then under his breath. It was no time for loud hilarity.

Callahan raved; the first baseman threw his glove on the ground, and jumped on it, and the right fielder walked around in little circles, making motions with his throwing arm. Ben Daly alone remained calm. The Blue Sox got the last man on a pop fly, and in dead silence the teams changed sides for the last of the ninth.

Hardy, trotting to his position in the outfield, passed within ten feet of Ben Daly. The manager was walking slowly toward the bench, his cap in his hand, and it seemed to Hardy that the man had suddenly grown gray and old. There were deep lines in his face, and all the spring had gone out of his step. Hardy wanted to speak to him, but could think of nothing to say, and so wisely held his tongue. It was the boy's first glimpse of a real baseball tragedy, and it hurt him to think that this thing had to happen to a man who had been his friend. He was conscious of a thankfulness that he had had no hand in the play.

In the coacher's box a blue-stockinged warrior was yelling that the game was still young.

"It's not over yet!" he shouted. "Not over yet!" There was no reassuring bellow from the grand stand where the fans were sitting huddled together, still stunned by the magnitude of the calamity that had overtaken them.

Thomas ambled out to the box to face "Budge" Tipton, put in to hit for Callahan. Jaggs could have done no worse. Budge swung at two slow ones, and then popped up a weak foul to the catcher. Harrison, the next man up, took a strike, and then dropped the ball neatly over the third baseman's head for a single. The fans in the stands suddenly came to life with a sharp cheer. They screamed madly when the Red catcher dropped the next ball and Harrison slid to second. Like a flash the temper of the great sullen crowd changed. It began to roar for blood. Thomas tried a fast inshoot on Kennedy, and Kennedy spun around and took the ball between the shoulder blades. The umpire gave him the benefit of the doubt, and Kennedy jogged down to first base, so much elated that he forgot to limp.

Higher and higher rose the yells from the stands. Thomas' luck was deserting him at last. Turn about was fair play. Gilson, the Red catcher, walked into the diamond and handed the ball to Thomas. The pitcher went back into the box, and discovered that his shoe needed tying. The Blue Sox rooters interpreted all these signs, and yelled to the umpire to make the Reds quit stalling and play ball.

Ben Daly stood at the plate, wagging a short, heavy bat in narrowing circles. Twice he gripped his war club between his knees, patted his hands in the dust, and wiped them upon the front of his shirt. Thomas knew all about Ben Daly. He had been pitching to the veteran for seven years. Thomas had many theories about Daly's hitting and only one certainty. He knew that Daly might hit anything anywhere.

The battery signals passed; Thomas was to try a fast drop. The ball broke like a wounded swallow; broke too soon, and striking in front of the plate bounded back to the stand, with Gilson in hot pursuit. Kennedy raced to second and Harrison to third. An insane asylum might have been recruited from the grand stand; the bleacherites were demented with joy.

Out in right field Hardy could barely restrain himself. He wanted to throw his cap in the air and add his voice to the tornado of sound. Only a baseball miracle could cheat Ben Daly out of his pennant now. Thomas was breaking; anybody could see that. At any rate, whatever happened, they could not say the Reds had not been trying.

Just then Thomas delivered the next ball; Hardy, following it with his eye, saw Daly shorten his grip on the handle of the bat, and chop wickedly. The next he saw of the ball it was sailing toward him, ten feet over the first baseman's head. Hardy heard a tremendous bellow, which seemed to beat down on him from above, and then he found himself running at top speed toward the diamond.

The boy realized the situation in one sickening flash. Daly had chopped the ball just beyond the infield. Before Hardy there lay the choice of two things. He might "play the ball safe" by taking it on the first bound, but if he did, Harrison would tie the score, and it would take a perfect throw to catch Kennedy at the plate. On the other hand, he might try for a fly catch. Should he get his hands on the ball before it touched the ground, it would be an easy matter to throw to second base and complete a double play. If he tried for the catch and missed, both men would score and the game would be over.

Before he had taken two full strides toward the diamond, Hardy's decision was made, and in that length of time he had weighed his chance of reaching the ball. He would try for the catch, and if he missed it—well, it was baseball to take the winning chance.

As he raced toward the diamond, Hardy was conscious of the monstrous unfairness of the thing. Why should this play be forced on him, of all the men on the team? Why hadn't Daly popped that ball to centre? It would have been safer there, for the centre fielder was playing deep. Without taking his eyes from the ball, Hardy saw that the coachers and base runners were willing to gamble that he could not make the catch. Harrison was almost to the plate, Kennedy was running down third, watching Hardy over his shoulder. Confound Daly!

Hardy measured the shortening flight of the ball with his eye. He knew if he made that catch it would be the greatest fielding play of his life as well as the most important one.

Over the din of the right-field bleachers behind him, the wild, hysterical yells of his old enemies, he caught the ancient refrain, lifted now in triumph:

"Tin can! Tin can!"

So they thought he had no chance, too, did they? Maybe he would show them something about fielding a short hit! That was the spur which carried him over the final forty feet. With one last bound, Hardy doubled forward and dropped both hands to his shoe tops. Something struck the palm of his gloved hand with a stinging thud, the leather fingers snapped shut, and with the triumphant yell of the rooters still quivering in the air, Hardy straightened up and, running a few steps, whipped the ball on a line to Moles, who was waiting on second base. The end of the game and the end of the Blue Sox pennant hopes came with the suddenness of a thunderclap.

Twenty minutes afterward Hardy was sitting in front of his locker in the clubhouse. Catterson entered.

"Throwing the games, eh!" he said. "Kid, that was the greatest play ever made in this town!"

"Oh, shut up!" Hardy burst out. "I couldn't do it again in ten years! I wish I'd dropped it!"

"No," said Catterson softly. And then, under his breath: "Jee-rusalem! I wish he had!"

You have been enjoying the Van Loan baseball stories all summer. Two weeks from to-day, in the first October number, on the stands September 10th, you will have a chance to read a Western story by the same writer. It's a corker.

THE IGNORANCE OF A FOOD EXPERT

IF the public does not know that Doctor Harvey W. Wiley, the pure-food expert, is one of the most absent-minded men in the world, all doubt of the fact will vanish after this story has been read. The doctor takes his lunch in the café of the National Press Club, and when he lunches he misses no bets, overlooks no food. He has a fine appetite—a remarkable appetite, considering all the unpleasant and terrifying things he knows about foodstuffs.

One afternoon he finished his meal, walked into the cloakroom, and put on his hat. As he was going out he was accosted by a friend, who invited him to lunch with him.

Doctor Wiley hesitated.

"To tell you the truth," he said whimsically, "I don't know whether I've just had lunch or not."

He thought deeply for several moments.

"Just to make sure," he concluded seriously, "I'll go in and have another."

And he ate as much the second time as he had the first.

A HARD RETURN TRIP

WALKER HINES, railroad authority and expert on rapid transportation, tells a story of an Irishman who traveled with the greatest speed ever recorded. The Irishman was down on his luck and needed a lodging place. After asking the loan of a bed in several houses in a small Western town, he encountered a preacher, who told him:

"There's an unoccupied house down the road a little way. You might sleep there. But I am going to warn you that the house is haunted."

"No matter," replied the Irishman; "I'm not afraid of ghosts."

Soon after dark the preacher dropped in to see the Irishman and found him in the haunted house and a trifle nervous. Three days later he saw coming down the road the weary and dusty figure of the former tenant of the ghost-ridden house.

"Why, where have you been?" he inquired kindly. "What have you been doing during the three days since you went into that house?"

"All that time," replied the Irishman, "I've been coming back."

EXERCISE AND REFORM

Perry Belmont, who has devoted the last four or five years of his life to the movement for publicity in contributions to political campaigns, is out of bed and on his horse for a long ride by seven o'clock in the morning. He believes in exercising, and plays golf in the afternoons.

Luxurious Lou

By Roy Norton

Author of "The Land of the Lost," "The Vanishing Fleets," Etc.

Down in Willow Gulch the miners were not accustomed to frills and furbelows. You will be interested in their reception of the luxurious young person who, in addition to her brave display of feathers and ribbons, was so adorned with diamonds and jewelry that she glittered when she walked.

ONE happy marriage can cause more trouble than all the unaided fascinations of a hundred likely-looking girls. It was undoubtedly the shining example of Marietta and Stinger Johnson, there on Willow Creek, for instance, that caused poor little Tim Bryant to fall into a snare, like a fool brown bear tripping gayly into a trap. Since then all things on Willow Creek date from that year. It was such an upset for all of us, who had never suspected Tim of anything wrong in the head prior to that time!

It happened when Tim went over into Utah to sell an interest in a claim he had over there, and the first word we had of it was when, just ten days after we saw him off on the stage for Four Flush, we got a characteristic letter. I've got it yet. Here it is:

DEAR BILL: I write this in my usual health, and hope you all are enjoying the same. The weather here has been right fine, although it rained some when I first came, and I saw that mule-eyed Hank Williams that used to be down in Hangman's Gulch when the train stopped for grub in Winnemucca. I sold my quarter in the Gold Pan for twenty thousand dollars, and celebrated some in Park City till the town marshal wanted to know the address of my friends and relatives, and then I laid off celebrating. Don't tell Marietta or the other boys. I won't be home for a month more because I've got a few other things to tend to. Please excuse bad spelling and a bum pen. Yourn, TIMOTHY BRYANT.

P. S.—I met a mighty fine girl here in Park City. She's about thirty-five and old enough to have some sense. She's all right and knows what's what, because her daddy used to be a county sheriff in Nevada. Tex Meacham his name was until he had an accident. Mike Dougherty shot him. Her name is Louisiana, but I call her Lulu for short. Good-by. TIM.

P. S.—By the way, you might tell all the folks on Willow Creek and kind of square it up for me, that I married Lulu. TIM.

It took me fifteen minutes to get over the shock of the last postscript, and then I didn't know whether to laugh or to use strong language. I broke the news to everybody in the gulch that afternoon, and each took it differently. Marietta and Stinger were glad. Shakespeare George said, "Good Lord!" Sympathy Smith slapped his knee and laughed with his big voice till you could have heard him a mile. Mister Paganini smiled, and Tom Evans grunted and growled; but you couldn't expect anything else from Tom, who had been married three or four times, and was like a sun-dried piece of venison—well cured. He had me read the postscripts over two or three times to make sure that Tim "had plumb gone crazy," and then shut up when Marietta went after him.

"I don't see that it's any of your business," she said, smiling. "You ought to be glad that Tim is happy. He's old enough to marry, isn't he?

He was forty-eight on his last birthday, and it's time he was settling down. He needs a wife. So there!"

It had been a pretty dry season with us, and the reservoir on the mountain's top was running low, so we didn't have very much to do. It takes considerable water to run six hydraulic streams, and a little Giant nozzle whines and doesn't do good work unless it has a good head back of it. That was what made us think we could take time to give Tim and his Lulu a good surprise. I think Sympathy Smith suggested it. He was always suggesting something. We decided to build a big addition to Tim's cabin and have it ready by the time he came home.

That is, we all decided except old Tom, who grouched and growled more than I had ever known him to. If it hadn't been that I suspected his own marriages hadn't been very profitable and knew that he was down on all women except Marietta, I would have been surprised, because Tom certainly did think a lot of Tim. The rest of us, working away and having a good time building that addition, missed him.

We fell into the tall timber up on the steep side of the gulch above Tim's cabin and picked out the cleanest lot of logs I ever saw used. Wasn't a one that didn't go a full forty feet, straight and true! Tom kept his hydraulic running all the time we were at work, and never once looked up toward us fellows who were felling and trimming the trees, and then shooting them, "kersmash," down the hillside. We could see him from where we worked, looking like a round, squatty speck of a man, away down below us.

When we got the timber down we sent out and had a teamster from Four Flush bring up his horses to snake the logs up the inclines and drop them on top of each other, and the way those walls went up was a caution. Mister Paganini and Marietta sat on a stump out of the way and watched us—at least Marietta did—and Mister Paganini smiled and looked as happy as if he weren't blind and could see every stick laid.

The teamster brought a load of lumber for the floor, and some windows. That shows you that we did things right for Mister and Mrs. Tim's homecoming, because lumber was worth twenty cents a foot when laid down in our gulch, and a plank floor a luxury. Marietta went down to Four Flush and bought some furniture, which the teamster brought up—real fancy furniture—that red-plush and gold-edged kind that makes you uncomfortable to sit on. She got some pictures, too, and some glass vases to hold flowers over the stone fireplace that we fellows built at the end of the big room. There wasn't a thing about the place that we weren't proud of, nor a piece of it that Mister Paganini didn't feel to see what it was like.

It was finished a long time before Tim and his wife were due, and we used to sit around in it at nights and wonder what we could do to make it look better. We had spells of shifting the furniture about to see which way it would look the best, and each one contributed things from his own cabin to make it look a little more like a palace.

"You see," Marietta said, "it's likely she's been brought up like a real lady, with all the comforts and elegances of a fine house, being the daughter of a sheriff, who probably lived in the jail, and so we must make her feel at home. Maybe she's not used to rough things like the rest of us."

Every one agreed except Tom, who did as usual, grunted "Humph!" But inasmuch as he had sulked all the way through, it sounded natural. We had some fear that he would spoil the housewarming when Mrs. Tim came to take possession, for, as Marietta told him, "A house to be warmed must be filled with warm hearts."

It was while we were waiting for other word from Tim, that Tom got a letter. He came up to my cabin one evening to tell me about it, and stood for a full minute in the doorway, looking grim, and smoking like an engine.

"Bill," he said, "once I grubstaked a feller that used to be a pardner of mine, and once he grubstaked me when

I was down and out. Poor old Ben! He was a mighty fine feller!"

I cocked my ears forward like a jack rabbit. Tom Evans getting sentimental in his talk was something new to me. I wondered if he was sick. He smoked for a while more, and then said: "Ben has sent for me to come to him, up British Columbia way. He's down on his back, and unless he's got some one there he can depend on to straighten things out for him, might get robbed out of his claim. I'll have to make a trip up there and see about it."

"Well, Tom," I said, "as soon as Tim gets back with Mrs. Tim, I reckon it's no more than right for you to go."

He took a few more puffs, and stood looking out across the gulch.

"That's just the trouble," he said, "I can't wait till they get here. I'm goin' to-morrow mornin'. I sure do hate to have Tim think I'm neglectful-like. You'll have to fix it up for me when he gets here. Tell him how sorry I am that I can't take part in this house-warmin' of his, and tell him I hope he's right happy. If that woman of his wants to do the right thing by him——"

There was something in his tone that I didn't like; but there's no accounting for the ideas of a man who has been married several times with a general run of bad luck in the draw. About four unsuccessful marriages do sour a man's disposition.

"How about Mister Paganini?" I asked.

"That's what I come to see you for. I think I'll lend him to you while I'm gone. Just lend him, you understand, don't you?"

That was rather amusing, considering that Mister Paganini belonged to all of us, we having together brought him to the gulch the time we found him down in Four Flush. Tom, however, had always insisted that the blind violinist was his partner, and as there wasn't any use in fighting for him, we had let Tom have his way.

"Certainly," I said; "that goes. He comes and lives with me while you are gone."

So that night Tom broke the news of his trip to all the others in Willow Gulch, and the next morning we saw him off; and Mister Paganini, together with the new fiddle we had bought him in San Francisco, and the old one he liked best, came to live with me. Nobody made any objection; but every one, particularly Marietta, thought it was kind of mean of Tom not to wait until Tim and his wife came home.

Somehow Tom's closed cabin looked lonesome, squatting down there in the gulch by itself, with never a wisp of smoke from its big stone fireplace. Daily Mister Paganini "tap-tapped" his way down the trail with his long stick in hand, and cared for the flowers that he never could see, but seemed to know by scent and feeling when he ran his gentle, delicate old fingers across their uplifted faces; but we knew Tom wasn't there, and it gave us a feeling of change.

On the fifth day after Tom left we got word that Tim and his wife were coming, and all went down to Four Flush on the stage to see them come in. Hackett MacCreary galloped his four squarely up to the stage station on this occasion, before he pulled them up on their haunches. The door opened, and Tim got out first. After him, sort of sidewise because her hat was so big it couldn't pass through the door on the level, came Mrs. Tim.

Wow! I wish you could have seen her! Feathers and frills, and ribbons and gewgaws, and Tim had plastered her with diamonds and jewelry till she glittered when she moved. She had long, black gloves with diamond rings pulled over the outside, and carried a gold purse with a lot of junk dangling around it that jingled and clanked like a freight mule's harness. Her hair was blonder than any girl's at the dance hall, and she had one gold tooth in front that had worn so bright that when she smiled you couldn't keep your eyes off it.

As she climbed down out of the stage I glanced at Marietta, who stood there looking so much neater and finer in her plain, white hat with the four dents, and her short skirts and high-legged

shoes. Her eyes were very level, as if she was sizing up Mrs. Tim for all she was worth. Whatever she thought, she didn't lack for politeness. She pulled off one of the buckskin gloves that she always wore, and put her hand out to Mrs. Tim, who lifted it up for one of those high handshakes.

"Well, folks," Tim said, grinning like a Siwash about to take a drink, "there she is. Ain't she a sure-enough peach?"

She sure was, but somehow I think most of us were a little disappointed. We all tried to be nice to her because she was Mrs. Tim and would be one of us. Shakespeare George pulled off his hat, and said he hoped she was "feeling peart after her long journey," and Sympathy Smith, after bungling and hemming around a minute, relieved his idea of hospitality by asking her if she wouldn't like to "Come into Red Milligan's dump and have somethin'."

I think she would have accepted and called for straight rum if Marietta hadn't got her by the arm and led her away toward the hotel.

"Where's Tom?" Tim asked, apparently missing him for the first time.

I explained, but before Tim could say anything his wife called him, and in a few minutes we, too, started toward the hotel, listening to Tim, who could talk on one subject only.

"She's an angel girl, that's what she is," he kept saying. "Ain't I the lucky geeser? See them diamonds and that other stuff? Cost me a cool ten thousand to fix her up that way. She don't look none like she did when first I saw her. She's an actress. That's what she is! What do you think of that? No dance-hall bundle, but a real actress. She was the star in Cole's Colossal Comic Opera Company; but she was out of a job when I met her in Park City, that feller Cole havin' busted up and run away like a hound without payin' his company off. If ever I lay my eyes on him I'll fix him! The cussed Piute, to treat my angel Lulu that way!"

He gibbered and babbled all the way to the hotel, and we stood for it because there is no accounting for a man newly married and in love with his wife. We hoped he'd get over it in time, like boys do with the mumps, or whooping cough, so let him swell and whoop his head off while the spell was on.

We sat around the hotel parlor that night and listened to Tim do all the talking, with Shakespeare George helping out now and then, and Mister Paganini listening and running his fingers through his white beard as if thoughtful about the whole affair.

When we took the stage for the climb up the divide on the following morning, Mrs. Tim thought it was a trifle early to get out, and she wasn't very sociable for two or three hours, but in time she thawed out. We discovered she wasn't a very good walker on the trail when we left the stage and turned off into the little path winding in and out under the big trees, and over the crest of the range to where we dropped down into our gulch.

I was in the lead and trying to imagine how it would all look to her. I had to admit that the sight of Willow Creek was, perhaps, not so homey and kind to every one as to us who lived in it. The great red gullies, torn by the hydraulics through the heart of the gulch, the piles of naked boulders left on bed rock, and the long strings of sluices, either lifted above or sunk into the bed of the creek, all looked good to me, who had seen them grow year by year, since first we came.

I glanced back. Mrs. Tim's face was worth looking at; but she wasn't smiling so that it could be noticed. Tim was dancing around with joy and surprise at the first glimpse of his new cabin. He acted as if, in his eagerness, he was about to bolt and plunge down the hillside to have a look at it; but he couldn't run away and leave Mrs. Tim. All he could do was to explain to her what we had done, and she said nothing at all.

And she didn't say anything when we went into the cabin, which was all fixed up with flowers and everything we had contributed until it was like a palace to us. I think Tim was disappointed that she didn't say something, and tried to

make up for it by thanking each of us several times over.

It was a good housewarming we had that night. Mister Paganini sat by the fireplace, and played, and every one had something to say, and the only thing lacking was crusty old Tom, for whom, once in a while, we had a thought. When we said good night and left the Bryants in their new cabin door, we all walked home with Marietta and Stinger, It was bright moonlight, and to me the gulch was like a dream, lying there softened into shadows and pale spots by the night. I believe most of us were thoughtful, Marietta the most of all, but she said nothing, not even when Mister Paganini and I, the last to leave, turned away for our short trip down the gulch.

Well, that was the way it began. For the first few days we went up to Tim's pretty regularly; but it wasn't like going to Marietta's. Marietta made a fellow feel at home. Tim's Lulu always tried to be polite. Marietta would say: "Hello, Bill! Sit down and smoke, if you can find a chair, and if you can't, why the doorstep is pretty comfortable." Mrs. Lulu would say: "Ah! Good evening! Did you wish to see Mister Bryant? Well, he is down in the creek tinkering with one of his sluice boxes. I suppose he'll be back after a while with his dirty, muddy clothes, and dirty, muddy boots, to put clay all over the house."

Then if we dropped in to spend the evening, we would find poor old Tim, dog-tired from his day's work, but all togged out with the new store clothes he had bought in Park City. Yes, he had to dress up and shave every night to satisfy his Lulu. As she got better acquainted, she used to put in the time roasting whichever one of us wasn't there at the moment, until at last it worked out as those things always do—some of the boys not being quite as cordial to one another for a while, and then having an understanding, with the result that no one paid much attention to any of Mrs. Lulu's complaints and mean little insinuations. And we didn't go to her house any more to see her, but only because we all wanted to keep our Tim from thinking there was anything wrong.

It took just a month for affairs to reach this point, and we were beginning to worry about Tom. Then a letter came from him. With the bad spelling knocked out, it said:

> My old pardner needs me pretty badly; so I'm not coming back for quite a while. I know you boys will look after my claim and take care of Mister Paganini till I come back. Is Tim Bryant, the cussed fool, happy with his Lulu? If anything happens you want me to know about, write me in care of Schwabacher's Supply House, Seattle, and they'll see I get it. So-long! TOM.
>
> P. S.—I buy all my grub from them. They're good outfitters.

It was quite plain to me that Tom had no intention of coming back before his old partner got well, so we gave up being anxious about him.

In the second month after she arrived, Tim's Lulu got to hankering for another trip; so Tim laid off and took her to San Francisco, although it was a pretty busy season and the weather so fine that a man working a hydraulic claim naturally wanted to get in every hour of time. But it was Tim's claim, so it was none of our business. We saw her go without any great sorrow. Nobody laid awake and cried nights that I heard of.

They were gone two weeks; but before they got home she had bought and sent up a lot of new furniture, as if all we had got for them wasn't enough. When they came back they brought a city hired girl with them, because Mrs. Tim, if you please, had put her foot down and said she would do no more work. She didn't appear very happy to be back home, or to see any of us, although we all went around that night to say "Howdy!" She had more jewelry which Tim had bought to please her.

She had put the new furniture in the front room and said the other "stuff was good enough for the kitchen and bedroom."

We didn't like that very well, and Tim stared at the floor as if he knew how we felt about it.

The big blow-up came about a week later, when Sympathy, and George, and me dropped in for a few minutes and found Mrs. Tim in a temper.

"You take your boots off outside when you come in this house," she was saying to Tim as we arrived. "This ain't no clay bank. It's bad enough to have you and your horny-handed friends around without having all the mud the pack of you carry around on your elephant feet!"

We would have slipped away without making that visit, if Tim hadn't come to the door just then and seen us. Once inside we tried to be pleasant; but it was no use. George told something that Marietta had done.

"This Marietta person," Mrs. Lulu remarked, "seems to be the whole show around this gulch. I'm sick of hearing about her. She fell in pretty soft when she landed that little red-headed sucker you call Stinger."

Tim tried to pacify her and to change the conversation; and at that she flamed like a prairie fire.

"Oh, you needn't butt in," she said. "I know all about your Marietta. She was nothing but a faro dealer till she got soaked in religion and——"

Sympathy, and George, and I were on our feet all at once. Poor Tim was white. We felt sorry for him!

"It's all right, Tim," drawled George, putting out his hand. "We boys aren't going to say anything; but as far as I'm concerned, I'm not comin' back here any more."

"Me neither," growled Sympathy, and I had no need to say anything, for Tim could see that I was with them. As we turned away down the trail we heard her laugh, and say a few things we weren't used to, even from the women of the dance halls. We got down to the foot of the hill without a word, and then shook hands.

"I reckon we all has heard nothin'?" Sympathy asked.

"Nope, nothin' at all," George and I agreed.

"And the reason we don't go to Tim's cabin no more is because we're afraid of dirtyin' up the new carpet?"

"That goes," we said, and that was all the conversation we had about Mrs. Timothy Louisiana Bryant.

It was but two days more when we saw Tim escorting Mrs. Tim to the stage trail, and when he came back he said he wanted to do some shopping and was going to Portland, Oregon, this time, because Four Flush stores didn't keep what she wanted. She was to be gone a week, but it was nearly two before she came back with a new line of clothes she used to put on and walk up and down the gulch with, as if bound to have some one, if only us fellows, see and admire them. Then, after a while, the hired girl got enough and pulled out, and Mrs. Tim took to making trips to the city to get new ones. Some of them stayed two days, and some stuck it out two weeks; but at last Mrs. Tim went back to visit her folks in Utah, and Tim had a rest.

The first word he had from her was a letter in which she said her brother was in financial trouble and would Tim please send her at once five thousand dollars. Tim never gave a growl, so far as I know, but sent her ten thousand. Then she wrote that her mother had been taken ill and she would need some more. Tim sent that. Then she had to have money to buy a few new dresses, and to come home in, and Tim made good.

When she got back after that six weeks' absence, she was flashier than ever, and this time she didn't even speak to any of us when she arrived. As I wrote Tom, from whom I heard every once in a while, it began to look as if Willow Gulch wouldn't hold many of the old crowd if it kept up much longer, it being too small for all of us to live in peace. Tim began to act worried and lonely. Nights when she had been away, he gathered with the rest of us and chirked up a little; but when she returned he never came near us in the evening time, and we knew the reason why. Marietta faithfully tried to be friendly, and to induce the others of us to visit Tim's; but it was no use. Our Tim was left alone with his Lulu.

Pretty soon after her return she de-

cided she had to go to Seattle to visit some friends, and then, like a slap in the face, Tim got the letter that upset him. He brought it to me to read, and stood rubbing his hands across his forehead as if numbed and thick-headed. She wrote:

> You will remember that the first time you struck me, two weeks after we were married, you promised never to do it again. Then the time you beat me in San Francisco I forgave you; but when you struck me there in the home I love so well, on Willow Creek, and threatened to kill me, I became afraid. You said your fine pals there on the creek would swear you out of it if you killed and planted me in a hydraulic dump, and I'm afraid they would. So I have this day hired a lawyer to get me a divorce. If you want to settle it up without any fuss in court, you can send me a small part of what you have, say one hundred thousand dollars, and we will call it square.

I read the letter twice to make sure of it.

"So help me Heaven!" Tim said, "I never done nothin' to her, Bill. You know I ain't the kind to strike a woman, don't you? You fellers here on the creek wouldn't believe that of me, would you? Lulu has sure gone crazy!"

I leaned back against the edge of my bunk and laughed. The idea of Tim making threats, or hammering his "angel girl," was too ridiculous. I saw that he was about as near blubbering as ever he could get, so sympathized with him.

"Pay her off and get rid of her," I advised. "Shed her while you have a chance."

"But I haven't got that much money," Tim said.

"Who said you had?" I answered. "Don't mind that. She'll take less. She's done pretty well, anyway, and—well, Tim, she isn't suited to this kind of a life. You know that. You and I will pull out and go to Seattle and see her lawyer."

We decided to break the news diplomatically to the other boys, and leave Mister Paganini with Sympathy Smith.

"So!" Sympathy snorted. "So! Wants a hundred thousand, huh? Well, we won't give it to her. Will we, Bill?"

I liked the way he declared himself in on the deal. He put his hand on little Tim's shoulder and said: "Mister Paganini will have to stay with George. I'm goin' along to see that you don't get done out of any money."

When we got to George's and explained the situation to him, he first offered to lend Tim what was lacking to make up the sum, and then, it being declined, said: "Well, we'll have to go over to Stinger's and arrange for him and Marietta to take care of Mister Paganini. I'll have to go over to Seattle to attend to the matter, I suppose, because I'm about the only one that can call that Louisiana Bryant down right. She'd get the best of all you fellows."

And the result was that we four partners pulled out together for our first visit to Seattle since it had become anything of a town.

We felt almost as lost there as we did in San Francisco, the time we got gold-bricked out of a thousand dollars for a two-dollar fiddle. We consulted Mrs. Tim's letter and saw that it was written from the Butler Hotel, so away we went to another place called the Metropolitan, well up the street, for another consultation as to what we were to say, as if we hadn't been talking it over steadily for nearly two days. We gawped along the front of the Metropolitan, where we could look inside the office through big plate-glass windows, and of a sudden all stood still with our mouths hanging open.

Sitting inside, with his chair tilted back, and his feet on the window ledge, dressed like a San Francisco banker and smoking a big, long cigar, sat old Tom Evans. He was manicuring his finger nails as if he had forgotten that they ever did any work. Feeling us four stare at him, he pushed his hat back off his forehead and looked up. His chair legs came down with a thump and he tore toward the door, almost knocking down two or three commercial men and a suspender peddler, and for a full minute the astonished guests of that house had a fine sight of five

fellows pounding one another on the back and yelling in chorus, "Well, I'll be hanged!" or worse, as individual fancy and lack of morals might dictate.

We went up to Tom's room, where we explained the case, all except Tim, who sat with his head between his hands as if still half dazed by his bad luck. That "Lulu angel girl" had certainly put him on the blink. Tom sat and smoked.

"You say she's had nearly forty thousand dollars, Tim?" he asked.

Tim lifted his head long enough to say "Yep."

"Feel like givin' her any more?"

"The case is this way," Shakespeare George broke in, as if he were Tim's attorney. "As the poet says, 'the quality of mercy ain't never strained like cow's milk. It raineth as the wet mist from Heaven.' Our pardner don't want no woman, leastwise one joined to him in the holy matrimony laws, to think he'd play mean and merciless just because she had. We've decided she can have ten thousand more, if she'll cash in all claims for that sum."

Tom smoked a while longer and walked around the window, looking down into the street where the cars and cabs were chasing one another, and then turned around.

"If it was me I wouldn't give her a cussed cent," he said; 'but if you feel that way, why don't all of you fellers go up there and lay the law down to her? See what she has to say, and go together, mind you, so she can't swear Tim tried to murder her with no witnesses there to see the fun. Come on, I'll show you the way."

It took us about ten minutes to walk to the Butler Hotel, which was a pretty grand affair. Tom kind of took charge of things, as he seemed to know the man behind the desk.

"Henry," he said, "Mrs. Bryant's husband is here and wants to sort of surprise her. All of these other fellers are her old-time friends. Can't you send 'em up without no cards?"

Henry was obliging and did so; but at the last minute Tom said he wanted to meet a man in the office and would be up in about ten minutes, so let us go alone. We weren't half as brave as we had been when we started up in the elevator, and Tim showed signs of backing out. We did get to the door at last, however, with George in the lead, and when it was opened Mrs. Tim gave a start and said, "Well, what do you want, you ruffians?"

George lost his nerve, but Sympathy crowded forward.

"We are comin' in there to talk to you, Lulu," he said, "and don't you start to raise no row, or we'll make it a sure-enough scandalous proceedin'."

For just an instant she tried to stare him out; but Sympathy wasn't that kind, so she got a little whiter in the face and backed into the room, and we went after her. She didn't offer us seats, but we took them. Then Sympathy got right down to business.

"You asked for a hundred thousand," he said, "and we've come to tell you that you don't get it. We'll give ten thousand, and not a cent more."

"Did I marry you?" Mrs. Lulu asked with some scorn. "I seem to forget. What have you got to say about it, you big, coarse rough neck?"

We all tried to pacify her, but she had got started, and her voice never stopped, but rose louder and louder, as she told us each, and separately, what she thought of us, of Willow Creek, and nearly everything else under the sun. She had just got up to that note they call high C, when the door opened softly. We had our backs to it and didn't notice; but we saw her stop in the middle of a word, with her mouth open, gasp, and then begin to back toward a chair in the corner of the room, into which she slumped down as if sandbagged. We whirled around. There stood Tom.

"I heard your talk, clean out in the hall, Lou," he said, "so I thought I'd come in and say 'Howdy.' I reckon your game's up! I'll do the talkin' now. Tim, I ain't been to no British Columbia. I've been right here all the time, waitin' to see how this marriage thing would turn out. You see I was in a bad position. I didn't want to spoil

your happiness, if she could give it to you, and I didn't know but what Miss Lulu Meacham wanted to do the right thing by you. It wouldn't have done no good for me to stay there and tell you what I thought about it, because a man in love always believes what the woman tells him, even if she says it's a flat earth. So I pulled my freight and waited. And it's been a mighty long wait, too, because—well, because I've missed all of you fellers, and Marietta, and that kid of hers, and my old pardner Paganini."

It was the first time I'd ever known Tom's voice to choke up, and for an instant he was quiet. Then he turned toward Lulu, who was now sobbing into a lace handkerchief.

"Lou," he said, "I shan't let Tim give you one red cent. If you ask him for it again, now, or any other time, I'll have you sent over the road for keeps. You ain't been divorced from me yet, I think, and, what's more, you've got two other husbands livin' that I know of, and you ain't never had no divorce from them, unless it's happened since they last wrote me. You're in pretty deep!"

We had all been leaning forward, and Tim was hanging to the arms of his chair. Tom looked at him kind of pityingly, as if, from his own experience, he knew how it all hurt, and then went on:

"You see, boys, this woman took all I had about ten years ago, on the same layout. That's how I happened to come to Willow Creek. My name wasn't always Tom Evans. It used to be Thomas Evans Gates, back in Missouri, where I was dragged up. She married me in that name, and that's probably why she never knew that Tom Evans, of Willow Creek, had ever known her."

He stepped to the little telephone hanging on the wall and handled it as if he knew how. He called for his friend the clerk and said, "Hello, Henry! That you? I wish you'd go across the corridor and buy a railway ticket for Mrs. Timothy Bryant to Park City, Utah, and engage a berth in a sleeper on the first train. I'll settle for it when I come down. So-long."

He hung the receiver up and dug down into his pocket, and took out five shining gold pieces.

"Lou," he said softly, "you've got plenty of money probably, cached away somewhere; but it's the last time any of us will ever see you, I hope, and so I'm paying out for you the last cent I ever will. You get that train. You will, eh?"

She nodded her head as if surrendering, and looked at Tom as if she could have gleefully killed him with a hatpin.

"I'll get the train," she muttered, "if you'll let me go."

But as we went out of the door she couldn't hold in a parting shot.

"You all," she screamed, "are the easiest bunch of rubes that I've ever met west of Omaha. And if I hadn't had bad luck, I'd have skinned that idiot, Timothy E. Bryant, till all the court-plaster in Seattle wouldn't have patched him up!"

But we said nothing at all, for Tom was racing us out of the hotel with his hat jammed down over his eyes. He was like the others of us, glad to forget and to hurry back for Willow Creek—home to Willow Creek.

Two weeks hence, in the "Popular" out September 10th, you will get the next of the Roy Norton stories of Willow Creek. It is called "Old Bull's Fiddle."

ENTERPRISE IN THE SOUTH

Those who are accustomed to ridicule the lack of industry and original ideas in the South should visit the little town of Devine, Texas, where there is one large store. Above the building there is displayed in gigantic letters this sign:

"Everything from a rat skin to a ranch."

The Open Trail

WE have lighted our pipes and packed our kit
In the bow of our stout canoe,
And the paddles dip as we blithely hit
The trail of the open blue;
We are off to the land of careless days
To the spell of the summer breeze,
We are back again to the unmarked ways
Where the heart of a man's at ease.

There's a gurgle of water beneath the keel
As the ripples go plashing by;
We have left the city of brick and steel
For the arch of the kindly sky.
The murk that clouded the sun is fled
And our burden of care is gone,
And it's ho! for the camp and the fire ahead
And the scent of the pines at dawn.

The white of our cheeks will change to brown
And our muscles again will know
The springy strength that they lost in town
Where the sweating millions flow;
We're safe in the haven of God's outdoors
Away from barter and sale,
As we steer our course to the joyous shores
By the way of the open trail.

BERTON BRALEY.

The Penfold Adventure

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "The Fugitive Freshman," "The Stroke Oar," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS.

Miss Hester Penfold, an elderly maiden lady, the last of a long line of New England ship owners, discovers one of the old sailing ships formerly owned by her father, and decides to refit it and once more fly the Penfold house flag. A young cousin, Stephen Fleming, who holds a master's papers, appears opportunely and undertakes the work, assisted by Miss Angela Breck, the attractive niece of Miss Penfold. He immediately falls in love with the girl to the consternation of Ogden Haight, who has expected for some time that Miss Breck would marry him. As the old vessel is about ready, Angela confides to Stephen that her wayward brother Arthur has left college and is about to ship before the mast under a notorious captain. Stephen promises to find him. He does so, but at the last moment has to take the boy's place in the crew to release him.

CHAPTER IV.

CROSS-CURRENTS.

ARTHUR BRECK was a youth of sanguine disposition whom no misfortune could cast down for long. No sooner had he been set ashore from the *Ticonderoga* than he viewed the episode as a closed chapter and applied his sprightly wits to the task of unraveling the remaining tangle of circumstances. As he phrased it in the straight and simple language of the campus:

"That going to sea was a most footless stunt. It looked all to the good until I blew aboard the ship, and then I threw up my hands for fair. It got my nerve, all right. No wonder I was kicked off. They sized me up as perfectly useless. I hereby bequeath the salt, wet ocean to my ancestors. They can have it all."

The boatman had left him at the nearest wharf with his new sea chest, upon which he sat and kicked his heels while planning his campaign afresh. The chest contained his worldly fortune, for what fragments remained of his college allowance had been invested in oilskins, boots, sou'wester, sheath knife, and other nautical equipment. He was a stranded freshman, and the nearest friendly port was Stonehaven. Having been suspended from college for a term of one month, that refuge was blockaded even if he decided to return to the undergraduate fold. After writing that heroic letter to Angela, it was humiliating to have to go home, but what else could a fellow do? He couldn't sit on a sea chest and mope himself to death.

Whereupon Arthur Breck hailed a passing longshoreman and offered to sell him the sea chest and its contents for ten dollars cash. It was an alluring bargain, and after summoning a brace of comrades to help him finance the transaction, the longshoreman departed with the chest on a truck, while the freshman made straight for the Grand Central Station.

"Aunt Hester and Angela think I am out on the bounding billows," said he to himself, "and when I walk in and surprise them, they will be so glad to see me that the scolding won't amount to much. That's how it looks to me. It is what you call a very speedy, one-act version of 'the prodigal son.'"

This view of his plight was so cheer-

This is the second installment of "The Penfold Adventure." The first installment appeared in the first September "Popular," issued two weeks ago, which can be had at any news stand.

ing that he was whistling when he approached the Penfold mansion in the twilight. Angela happened to be coming in from the garden, and at sight of the prodigal she ran to meet him.

"Arthur, what possessed you to be such a little idiot?" she cried. "I have been worrying myself sick for fear Captain Fleming would not find you in time."

"Hello, sis. You're looking fine," said he. "But who the dickens is Captain Fleming? He is one bet I overlooked. What about Aunt Hester? Did you show her my thrilling letter?"

"She knows nothing about it. I was hoping you could go back to college and straighten out matters with the dean. What do you mean? Didn't Stephen Fleming take you away from that dreadful ship? Where is he? Didn't he return as far as Boston with you? Come right into the house. Aunt Hester is out for the evening."

"Never heard of the gent, Angela. And please don't mention any more 'captains' to me, or mates, either. You seem flustered. I didn't mislay this Fleming person, whoever he is."

His sister caught him by the arm and fairly dragged him into the library, where she thrust him into the nearest chair and demanded:

"Now, tell me every word about it, Arthur. And don't be so trifling, please."

"Certainly. But do you mind if I sit with my back to all those ship pictures? They give me an acute grouch. Well, Angela dear, the tale is short, but harrowing. I got as far as the deck of the *Ticonderoga,* and you never saw such a rough-house as broke loose. That sailor's boarding house had made me kind of droopy and homesick. The runner, Dick Mott, had been wise enough to keep me clear of the other hands, but when we trooped down to sign articles, I heard a lot of stories about old Reuben Doane and his ship that turned my stomach. And when the mates began to knock men about before we had left port, I figured out that football was just as lively and a lot more fun. It scared me, honest it did, and I saw what a blithering ass I was, and I just stood and sniveled until a mate with a fist like a ham caught me behind the ear and stood me on my head. I guess that he decided I was no good, for presently he damned me a few more and told me to vamose before he threw me to the fishes. And I vamosed."

"Then Stephen Fleming had nothing to do with your coming home?" Angela frowned and her accents were impatient. "Are you sure no one interceded for you?"

"A lot of good it would have done if old man Doane wanted to keep me on board. I had a narrow escape, all right. This phantom Stephen Fleming has me guessing. What is he? A new suitor? Why didn't you mention him in your letters?"

"I had good reasons. Aunt Hester didn't wish me to. You are so flighty that you would have been running home from college to see him and what he was doing. He will be here to-morrow. I presume he failed to find you on shore, and the ship sailed before he could get on board."

"He can go in the discard for a moment," said Arthur, who had become suddenly despondent. "See here, Angela; I am awfully sorry I flew off on this tangent. Will you help me square it with Aunt Hester? I am crazy to go back to college, and I'll be as good as gold. I've learned my lesson. And you two women are responsible for my seagoing outbreak. You talk nothing else, and I just caught it, like a case of measles."

"Aunt Hester must speak for herself," said Angela very sternly. "I am sorry and disappointed. We expect you to go through college and be a scholar and a gentleman. Aunt Hester has set her heart on it. If you are really interested in the sea you will have to wait until you are graduated and get a position in a shipping office in Boston or New York and work your way up until you are manager of a line of steamers."

"That sounds more like it," was Arthur's hearty verdict. "You are wel-

come to go romancing along about the brave old days of square-riggers. The square deal and a few home comforts for mine. But what am I going to do with myself for the next month? I am an exile, please to remember, and bankrupt at that."

His sister was busy with her own thoughts. It would never do to let this volatile youth spend his enforced vacation in Stonehaven. He would throw his own noble resolutions to the winds and clamor to be included in the fascinating enterprise of preparing the *Nautilus* for her voyage. The end of his first college year was not far off, and he must study diligently to pass the final examinations for admission to the sophomore class.

"What is the usual program for boys who disgrace themselves and have to be suspended from college?" she asked rather icily.

Arthur grinned and made candid answer.

"They are apt to be unpopular at home, so they march a few parasangs, as my friend Xenophon puts it, to a country town called Milford, and camp there with a tutor who makes a specialty of giving first aid to the injured. It is a small and select colony, and I have a notion that two or three of my dear classmates are there now. They would give me the glad hand. I am game for Milford."

"I have never deceived Aunt Hester before, but I do so hate to grieve her." Angela hesitated and went on. "She has been very happy and contented lately, and——"

"Oh, why fuss her all up? You were a brick to keep that silly letter of mine to yourself. Confound a sister that blabs on a fellow, anyhow! Why, the proposition is dead easy. I am not pining to meet Aunt Hester under the painful circumstances. If you can dig up some money I will flee under cover of darkness."

"And go straight to Milford and stay there, Arthur? I have a little money on hand, enough to keep you going until your next allowance check is due on the first of the month. Will you promise me to be good and patient and not neglect your college work with the tutor?"

"Sure thing, sis. My proud spirit is broken. If you look at me in that sad-eyed fashion, I'll burst into tears. I haven't done anything wicked. You ought to be thankful I am not being kicked to death on the *Ticonderoga*. Ugh, don't mention it."

Angela put her hand on his shoulder and kissed him with a wistful, maternal air that touched the boy's careless heart. After all, they belonged to each other, and she was the elder by three years. Bereft of both parents in childhood, they had been devotedly cared for by Miss Hester Penfold, but Angela was her favorite, and the boy stood in need of a father or an older brother to help and counsel him. The sister sighed, then smiled with loving confidence, and said softly:

"I trust you, Arthur. And I shall thank God in my prayers to-night that you were not taken far away from me."

With an arm around her supple waist he told her:

"I am awfully glad you forgive me. And I won't jolly you about this Stephen Fleming man. You behaved as if you took him pretty seriously. Send me a bulletin if there is anything doing, will you? I shall want to look him over in summer vacation."

Angela was spared explanation, for the hall clock chimed the hour, and Arthur exclaimed:

"Me for that next train to Boston and a sleeper to Milford. I left all my clothes and books with my roommate, and he will send them on. So all I need is some real money."

A few minutes later he scampered from the house, and Angela went slowly to her room, where she sat for some time in a mood of absorbed introspection. At length she was aroused by the voice of Miss Penfold, who called out, excited and gleeful:

"Do hurry down and let me talk to you. I have had the most delightful evening, and so much to tell you."

Angela was a silent listener, while Miss Hester, dropping into the nearest

chair, rattled on in the most vivacious manner:

"The Henderson children heard I was coming in this evening, and positively refused to go to bed. They know all about the voyage of the *Nautilus*, and have been toddling down to the Marine Museum to find out about the 'adventures' which the old-fashioned boys and girls used to send in the Stonehaven ships. Little Speckie Henderson had a list all written out on a smudgy scrap of paper. Listen to this, bless his heart:

"My adventure. Eighty-seven cents and a new baseball bat. Please buy nutmegs with the money, and swap the bat to a cannibal chief for a war club. N. B.—The bat cost forty cents.

"Dick Bremer's adventure. Four dollars in cash and a case of shoes from his father's factory. Put it all into firecrackers when you get to China.

"Joe Trask's adventure. Three hams from their farm, a stuffed owl, an air rifle, and $1.67 in cash. Be sure to make enough profits to buy a good turning lathe when you get back.

"Horace French's adventure. One live setter pup, a second-hand phonograph, and a nickel-plated watch. Buy elephant's tusks with what you can make on the lot."

"As for Barbara Henderson and her playmates," continued Miss Penfold, "their mothers are afraid to leave the pantries unlocked lest these adorable young ones carry off all the glasses of jelly to be sent in the *Nautilus* as 'adventures.' And what do you think, when I was going out to-night I was waylaid by the washerwoman's little boy who was hovering near the gate. It almost brought the tears to hear him pipe up: 'Please won't you take a 'venture for me? All I got is a cake o' soap ma give me an' 'leven cents I was savin' up for Christmas. I want a fur coat for my ma. They must be awful cheap out there where all the lions, and tigers, and wolfs come from.'

"I promised the child to bring home the fur coat, Angela. It made the voyage seem more real than ever. Children understand the world of make-believe."

"Don't you remember the game we used to play when Arthur and I were tots?" laughed Angela. "My battered dolls sat in a row in a window of a warehouse on Penfold Wharf waiting for the good ship *Mermaid* to come back from the Cape of Good Hope. And while Arthur launched his toy square-rigger I would chant most dolefully, 'Mrs. Captain Rawlins and her family watching for the signal of a homeward-bounder. Fifty-seven days overdue from the Cape and almost given up as tee-totally lost. Captain Rawlins is in command, and his wife's sister-in-law's husband is mate.' I used to cry at the sight of those poor women and children all flopped in a row, Aunt Hester. Then Arthur's little ship would bob in sight while I danced up and down and shouted, 'Hooray! It is the missing *Mermaid*. Cheer up, Mrs. Rawlins and all the little Rawlinses. Here comes your long-lost parent.'"

"Of course, I remember it, Angela. I found those unfortunate dolls in the attic not long ago. Oh, I must tell you Speckie Henderson's farewell injunction, and he was most solemn about it. 'You will carry some specie, won't you, Miss Penfold?' said he. 'It was the specie the pirates used to get after. They smelled it like rats after a chunk of cheese. There may be a few of these Malay and Chinese pirates doing business at the old stand. And the chests of specie will bring 'em after you, sure. Don't forget the grindstone to sharpen the cutlasses on.'"

"That sounds like too much realism," said Angela.

"Not with Captain Stephen Fleming in command," was the emphatic reply. "I shall be prepared to meet every peril of the deep with the utmost confidence. Of course we shall carry a reasonable amount of specie with which to buy coffee, spices, teas, ebony, and silks. I have consulted the old log books most carefully, and the *Nautilus* must have a roving commission, to clear from one port to the next, wherever seems most profitable. I shall load from here with dried codfish and dressed lumber as the bulky merchandise, and invest the greater part of our adventure in such

modern Yankee inventions as sewing machines, bicycles, phonographs, washing machines, hardware, farming implements, and canned goods. These things were not carried in my grandfather's ships, I am well aware of that," and Miss Penfold's manner became slightly apologetic, "but I do not propose to fill the hold with casks of New England rum, which I am sorry to say was one of their customs of trade."

So diverted was Angela by this lively picture that she had forgotten her own anxieties, which were recalled by the remark:

"We must go to Boston early to-morrow. I am very anxious to see Stephen Fleming about the plans for the living quarters. I have decided to make several changes. I expected him to telephone me to-day."

"He may have been uncommonly busy," murmured the girl, conscious of being enmeshed in a hateful web of petty deception. Again she fell to wondering what might have befallen him and why he had not come or let her know that the *Ticonderoga* was gone to sea. Miss Penfold was too interested in her own devices to note that Angela's demeanor had become distraught. With undiminished energy the elder woman hastened to the book shelves and took down a moldy sea journal, which might throw some new light upon the thrilling topic of specie and pirates.

When they arrived at the shipyard next morning, Miss Penfold was pleased beyond measure to discover how rapidly the shapely hull of the *Nautilus* was regaining its pristine staunchness and beauty. She looked eagerly about her to discern Stephen Fleming, but he was not to be found, and a courteous foreman announced that he had been absent on the day before. An important contract was awaiting his approval, one gang of workmen was idle on this account, and a messenger had been sent to his boarding house on the chance that he might have been taken ill. The word came back that he had not been there since Sunday at noon, and this was Tuesday.

"If he had been summoned elsewhere he would not leave his business at lose ends," said Miss Penfold. "I am sure he planned to be here to-day. What is your opinion, Angela?"

Alas, Angela had no opinion to offer. To confess would be to make the situation even more disturbing, and she was very strongly of the hope that Stephen would right matters himself by means of a belated return. Puzzled and disappointed, Miss Penfold was for retreating to Stonehaven and waiting for tidings of her adored and missing kinsman.

That afternoon Angela made an excuse to be alone, and walked mile after mile beyond the town and among the green fields. Her nerves were aquiver with vague apprehensions. She assured herself over and over again that this agitation, to which her robust vigor of mind and body had been hitherto a stranger, was uncalled for by the facts. Stephen Fleming might have delayed in New York to transact some business pertaining to the *Nautilus*. On the other hand, if he had reason to believe that his mission had failed, would he not have posted straight back to tell her so? At length she said to herself:

"If he does not come home soon, I shall have to confess to Aunt Hester that I sent him away and that I have been a horrid, sneaky, deceitful girl."

Persistent in her mind was the image of Stephen Fleming as she had last seen him, stalwart, nut-brown, alert, flourishing his hat with a touch of boyish elation as if he were delighted to set forth on his quest in her service. She returned late in the afternoon to find Miss Penfold a prey to manifold alarms, moving quickly when the doorbell or telephone rang. Already the ordeal had made her look old and weary. Angela's emotions became poignant as she caught this glimpse of what a vital part Stephen Fleming now played in her aunt's daily life, and how absorbed she was in their mutual plans and purposes.

"He will surely come to-morrow," said Miss Hester.

"Surely to-morrow," absently echoed Angela.

To-morrow dragged its slow length along, and Angela let it pass without confiding in her aunt. The shipyard received no word from the master of the *Nautilus*. Sparring for time, hoping against hope, Angela was silent through another day. Then Ogden Haight called, asking particularly to see Miss Penfold. He had been suffering certain pangs of his own, and his visit was in the nature of a reconnoiter. An aftermath of uneasy surprise at his own behavior had followed the scene with Stephen Fleming on the railroad station platform. It had been in truth an explosion provoked by the chance glimpse of Angela and the sailor hand in hand, in the romantic seclusion of Penfold Wharf. Aside from the ungentlemanly aspect of a public row, which was abhorrent to Ogden's code of manners, he was keenly conscious in calmer moments that the other man could break him in two over his knees.

Having heard a rumor of Fleming's disappearance, Haight tried to coax himself into the belief that he had actually made the adventurer take to his heels. He ventured to confide this conjecture to Billy Truelove, who was rude enough to laugh as he drawled incredulously:

"You may have scared him so desperately that he is running yet, but I have my doubts. He isn't that kind. You always regarded him with a jaundiced eye, Ogden, my boy."

"I was an ass to pick a quarrel with him," said Haight, stroking his blond mustache with a martial air, "but I was really bluffing him, don't you know, and perhaps it worked. I told him I knew all about him and had found him out, or something of the sort, and he couldn't jump for the train quick enough. I tried a rather clever dodge, Billy. I read a story something like it. A fellow sent a telegram to a bishop or some other blameless and conspicuous old duffer, saying: *'All is discovered. Flee at once.'* It was just for sport, do you see, and next morning the bishop had flown and was never heard of again."

Truelove chuckled, and his twinkle was skeptical, but he was too lazy to press the argument, and Haight found comfort in his theory. He decided to test it cautiously on Miss Hester Penfold, and when that melancholy lady came downstairs to greet him he was ready with diplomatic sympathy. Bowing over her hand, he murmured:

"Pardon me for not coming in earlier in the week, but I have been awfully busy. I hear that Captain Fleming can't—er—can't be found. If his absence threatens to interfere with your plans, I shall be only too glad to offer my services."

It did not escape her that he was by no means downcast, but she was too dispirited to call him to account. As one seeking light on a dark pathway, she asked quite gently:

"What happened between you two men? Angela has heard an astonishing story from Billy Truelove's sister."

He squared his shoulders, and sat very erect, replying with assumed reluctance:

"It was a personal matter, entirely so. I lost my temper, and talked to him as man to man. He had very little to say, was quite meek, in fact, and left town at once. Of course, I—that is—I prefer not to go into details."

Miss Penfold's comment was a little peal of musical laughter, delicately mocking, almost derisive.

"Oh, Ogden, you amuse me so," she faltered. "You are the most entertaining diversion of this unhappy week. So you compelled Stephen Fleming to make a retreat, horse, foot, and dragoons! And the mystery is explained. I am so sorry that Angela cannot hear this Homeric explanation."

"I didn't say that at all," muttered the badgered young man, who had turned pink to the ears. "Pshaw! I came in to offer to help you, and you ridicule me. Will Angela be busy all the evening?"

"She has a headache."

"Not on account of that——" He caught himself and glowered as if Stephen Fleming were present in the flesh. "The whole town is talking about it and wondering what you will do now."

"I have nothing to tell the curious town," she exclaimed. "And it will be a favor if you will guard my name and Angela's against foolish, spiteful gossip."

Presently she went to Angela's room and hotly announced:

"It is true. Ogden flatters himself with the utterly nonsensical notion that he made Stephen Fleming run away. I was very rude to him. He has been bragging about it from one end of Sussex Street to the other, I am sure."

"His outbreak of valor is one of the mysteries," wearily quoth the girl.

Intuition may have revealed to Angela that herein was no great mystery, after all, but she was not thinking of herself, as she confessed unsteadily:

"I should have told you before, but I hoped and hoped, just as you did, that Stephen Fleming would reappear. I sent him away on an errand for me. It was to get Arthur out of a scrape, and I could not bear to cloud your happiness. I did not know who else to turn to. And Arthur came home and went away—back to college—and Arthur had not seen him anywhere."

Angela told the story haltingly, surprised to find Miss Penfold more sorrowful than indignant, displaying no more than a flicker of temper as she said:

"Arthur is a little wretch. I should have felt like spanking him. He is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. Your regrets are a useless burden, Angela, and we will have no more family secrets, if you please. I am too far down in the dumps to scold you. However, we can let the truth be known, that he went to New York on business for us, and was not routed by Ogden Haight. Preposterous!"

"And will you try to find him?"

By no means hopeless, Miss Penfold answered stoutly:

"I intend to send Captain Chester Burdick to New York to-morrow with orders to interview the agents of the *Ticonderoga*, learn how and where her crew was shipped, and ransack the water front."

A few minutes later Captain Burdick received these commands over the telephone. So portly and rubicund a mariner as he could not nurse a grudge for long, and his resentment at being supplanted as a professional adviser instantly thawed. He departed early next morning, and by nightfall had found his way to Peg Moran's unkempt place of entertainment. That lanky buccaneer was wary of the first question asked by this prosperous-looking old stranger, and promptly recalling the episode of the slungshot, as promptly lied.

"Yes, sir, I know Mister Fleming, and it was too blankety bank bad about him. He was doin' fine, mate of a big ship, but he couldn't stand prosperity. He come into my house late one night, less'n a week ago. He must ha' blowed his wages and been lookin' for a berth before the mast. Anyhow, he got in a fight right in my hall, and some husky lad pasted him one on the nut, and he went out. I run a quiet, decent place, and don't stand for no disturbances. I see him once more, next day, when I was just quittin' the *Ticonderoga,* bound out, she was—and he come aboard with his head all tied up, lookin' rumpled and down an' out. He went to sea in her all right."

Captain Burdick was inclined to credit this glib narrative. He failed to link it in any way with the return of Arthur Breck, and the circumstances were not improbable. He was conscientiously anxious to get at the truth, but he had seen many a likely mate or seaman make a smash of it, and he could believe that after a season of tamed respectability Stephen Fleming had gone astray among his old haunts in New York. If he had forgotten and betrayed his trust in a roaring spree, he might have fled to sea at the first chance, drunk, lawless, goaded by remorse. Honest Captain Burdick asked many shrewd questions, but Peg Moran faced the bombardment without winking, and sadly reiterated:

"A man 'u'd think I shanghaied him. My good reputation is me stock in trade. Two or three other boardin' masters and the shippin' master seen

'Gentleman Steve' come aboard the *Ticonderoga* of his own free will an' lookin' as if he had been drunker than seventeen dollars. They'll all tell you he was there of his own accord, and went aft to strike the old man for a berth. I've knowed him for years. He was always a good man sober, but crazy as a cage full of bats when the booze was in him."

Captain Burdick mopped his bald head off to confirm the story. Having discovered the patrolman who went on duty at midnight, he was told:

"Sure, I remimber the case. He was a fine, big man with illigant shoulders. I was for runnin' him in, but he was well dressed and said his head was hurted. So I trun him in th' ambulance. He was pickled all right, fur he cuddn't talk straight. He was turned loose next mornin' after carryin' on somethin' fierce, so the hospital orderly told me."

The skipper sighed. This was poor tidings for Miss Penfold. Peg Moran was undoubtedly a rogue and a robber, but his tale was so plausible that there could be no gainsaying it. It was confirmed by several witnesses interviewed next day, and by way of breaking it gradually, Captain Burdick wrote and mailed a very formal report.

While this harrowing document was en route, Ogden Haight was speeding toward New York to make an investigation of his own. He took no one into his confidence, and his purpose was to satisfy his own curiosity, because the vision of a returned and vengeful Stephen Fleming still haunted his slumbers. And until he was sure of one thing or the other, his footing in the Penfold mansion would be extremely uncertain. From Angela he learned what trail the errant flight of Arthur Breck had followed, and he, too, came at length to Peg Moran's.

Instead of the boarding master, he encountered none other than that battered, graceless youth, Dick Mott, by vocation a runer and sailor's "jackal." Impressed by the sartorial elegance and condescending suavity of the visitor, Dick was courteous according to his lights ,and invited him "to chew the rag" in the back room of the nearest saloon. Steering his guest to a secluded table and ordering refreshments, the runner cocked his hat over one eye, and huskily confided:

"This Fleming guy has swell friends, all right. I'm wise to that, boss. Say, I'm goin' to be on the level with you. It's the one best best. You can't put the cops next, for there ain't no witnesses to prop up your case. You're a good sport, and you'll treat me right. I've been dead sore on meself, that's straight. I felt like a dog ever since. 'Twas me that soaked Mister Fleming. He was tryin' to break upstairs to find the rah-rah boy I was joshin' along as an able seaman. He knocked the old man over the ropes, and I had to tap him good and hard with a bit o' lead pipe to make him behave. The kid knew nothin' about it."

"He was trying to find Arthur Breck?" murmured Ogden Haight. "And then what?"

"He went to sea and the boy came ashore, that's all I know. Look here, what's the matter with me puttin' you next to the boatman that took Mr. Fleming aboard? The way it frames up to me is that Fleming was still lookin' for that kid, and he wouldn't let go. He was game as a pebble, he was, and he wouldn't take the count."

Haight nodded with a sickly smile. The story had taken the wrong turn. It failed to square with his desire. He followed in silence to the Battery, where Dick Mott separated a pock-marked, round-shouldered person from a group of loafing watermen, and imparted:

"This gilt-edged gent is a friend of mine, Joe. Also he is a friend of Mr. Fleming that was first mate of Cap'n Doane's ship. Now, cough up. I've been meanin' to ask you about it meself. You was with him the other day."

"That I was," said Joe, with a twisted grin. "It was queer, awful queer. Mister Fleming, he looks all to the bad, and he says to me: 'You come on board and stand by and keep your weather eye lifted for squalls. I've a

good mind to give you a message to telegraph for me,' says he, 'but I may not turn the trick, so I'll see you later.' He chases hisself aft, and runs afoul of old man Doane, and points most emphatic at the lump of a lad forrud who looks as if he come aboard by mistake. I drifts back under the lee of the poop and catches a word now and then. And I'll swear by all that's holy that Mister Fleming was strikin' a bargain that was the limit.

"He was bound to get the lad out of the ship, and he was willin' to swap places with him. And first I know, the lad is collared by a bucko mate and chucked over the side into my boat, and Mr. Fleming stays behind. And while I'm pullin' ashore, the kid sayin' nothing to me, I see 'em kicking Fleming forward to the fo'c'sle. Why didn't I butt in? Say, Dick, there's healthier places than old man Doane's packet when she's getting under way."

"He was willing to swap places with him," almost gasped Ogden Haight, for the words had smitten his understanding with the violence of a shock.

"And there wa'n't no grand-stand play about it," said Joe, the boatman. "He didn't even know I was onto his game. Somebody had stacked the cards on him, but he wouldn't lay 'em down, and he didn't squeal. It's kept me busy thinkin'."

Haight made a blunder, and pressed so much money on the pair to reward them for their time and trouble that they guessed he wished their tidings to go no further. He could not bring himself to the point of open bribery. In fact, his mind was all at sea, for he had never before come to grips with such a moral crisis as this. What a flimsy, ludicrous braggart he had been to prate of putting Stephen Fleming to flight! Self-interest fought to gain the upper hand. To tell what he had learned was to place Fleming upon a pedestal of the most noble quality of heroism. These and other thoughts of like import wrung his soul as he left Battery Park behind him, while Dick Mott sagaciously observed to his companion:

"Funny doin's, Joe. The swell Johnny ain't heartbroke because Mister Fleming fell off the earth. Did you get that? There's a crooked deal in this somewheres, but it's too foggy for me. What I done to Fleming was in the line o' duty, and him and me squared that busted head of his before he sailed. It strikes me that we've just been talkin' to the man higher up."

"Right you are, Dick," quoth the boatman in accents somewhat rueful, for he was a practical man. "We were a pair of wooden heads. We don't know who his nobs is or where we can find him again. He gave up so easy that he'd bear watchin'."

As he neared Stonehaven, Ogden Haight's mental processes became more acutely disquieting. In an amiable, slack-fibered fashion he had always followed the path of least resistance, encountered no bracing conflicts on the way to train his will for such an emergency as this. If he kept silent, Angela Breck might let the sailor drift into oblivion. And even if Fleming should write to her after months at sea, the *Nautilus* would have embarked on her own far-distant voyage in the meantime, and Ogden Haight hoped and expected to win a passage for himself in Miss Penfold's "adventure" ship.

Swayed this way and that, now declaring to himself that all was fair in love and war, again weakly repulsing the insistent temptation, he came at length to Sussex Street, and his course of action was not yet clearly charted.

It happened that he was spied by Captain Chester Burdick from the doorway of the Marine Museum. That worthy was propped in a meditative attitude, for all the world like an exhibit labeled "Well-preserved specimen of one of the last shipmasters of Stonehaven." So lugubrious was the old gentleman's ample countenance that Haight was moved to unbend and affably inquire:

"You appear to be flying distress signals, captain. Is anybody dead?"

Captain Burdick caught him by the arm, breathed heavily, and made doleful answer:

"You are a friend of Miss Penfold and that slap-up fine girl, or I wouldn't think of explaining matters. I just now came away from them, and I haven't felt so broken up since I was pallbearer at Captain Wilbur Tutt's funeral. Maybe you can cheer 'em up some and switch their minds off to automobiles, and golf, or some such trifling foolishness in your special line. I was ordered to find out what I could about this young seafaring man, Fleming, that took the *Nautilus* away from me and Andy Claghorn."

"And what did you discover?" Haight's voice was a trifle unsteady.

"About what I guessed beforehand. As soon as I got on his track in New York, it was all plain sailing. Same old story. Couldn't keep straight ashore more than a month or so. Got drunk, was robbed, I suppose, had a fight, was all stove up, and shipped in the first vessel out of port. He was ashamed to come back here. I thought better of him, honest I did, but the facts were plain as print. So I had to tell Miss Penfold after writing all about it."

"And did she believe your report?"

"Hester Penfold has known me more than forty years," snorted Captain Burdick. "Of course she did. What else could she do?"

"Thanks. It's too bad. I shall try to cheer her up."

Ogden Haight proceeded straightway to the Penfold mansion, where he came face to face with Angela Breck. Her glowing, buoyant youthfulness was sobered by a new aspect of dignity that was reserved and inscrutable. To his hesitant offer of sympathy, she replied indifferently:

"I do not care to discuss Captain Fleming, if you please. Perhaps my aunt may feel like explaining the affair to you later."

Chagrined by this aloofness, but reading in it a hope that the sailor had forfeited forgiveness, he asked eagerly:

"Shall you abandon work on the *Nautilus?*"

A fine resolution burned in her dark eyes, and she was no longer indifferent.

"Aunt Hester is really ill, and I am afraid of a nervous breakdown. Nothing else can lessen the shock of this bitter disappointment and make her like her own dear self again. So I shall urge her to make the voyage, and I am well enough acquainted with her plans to take them in hand myself."

"There will be an immense amount of detail," he volunteered. "I haven't very much to do, and you need a business man. Of course, I am not a tarry young shipmaster."

She silenced him with a gesture as if bidding him to speak well of the dead.

"I will talk it over with Aunt Hester. No doubt you could help buy the cargo."

He looked askance at her, discomfited that his reception was no more cordial. Now or never he must tell her the truth about Stephen Fleming. He chose the part of silence. It was not so much a deliberate choice as a surrender to opportunity. Captain Burdick had once said of him: "Young Haight is a clever, clean-run fellow, but he's a fair-weather kind of a cuss. Too much deckload and not enough ballast, and he doesn't draw very much water." The characterization was singularly apt in this tragic moment—tragic because he had been tried and found wanting. Angela had no more to say, and he therefore departed, ill at ease and feeling that he had been rebuffed.

Miss Hester Penfold's glad and busy world had been tumbled about her ears, and she did not know how to piece it together again. It was Angela who stood undismayed amid the wreckage and became a benevolent young despot, who could not be swerved from her appointed task. She was coaxing and hectoring by turn, and spoke her mind in this wise:

"Sussex Street is fairly buzzing with gossip. And all the old frumps and busybodies who were peevish because you failed to consult them are chortling 'I told you so.' They never had a chance to poke fun at you before. And to-morrow you must pull yourself together and go to the shipyard with me, and find out exactly what remains to

be done. I think Captain Chester Burdick should be placed in command at once. He is spry for his age, and will be genial company, besides which he used to trade at the Cape and the Dutch East Indies."

"But what shall I do with Captain Andrew Claghorn?" wailed Miss Hester, who was in a mood to magnify obstacles. "He is an indispensable relic."

"He is very rheumatic and has a cranky temper, and no longer fit for active sea service," firmly returned Angela. "Offer him a position as consulting master, or something of the sort. I shall compel those foolish old men to shake hands and agree to terms."

"I have refused to confess that I am growing old," said Miss Penfold, "but this experience seems to have left me stunned and bewildered. I have lost my initiative. It is a priceless blessing to be young. One can rise above misfortunes and laugh at hard knocks."

"But you will be poring over those moldy old log books before long," laughed Angela, "and quoting Captain Hosea and Captain John to me by the yard. I refuse to let you mope. Do you realize that the *Nautilus* will be towed around to Stonehaven before long and moored alongside Penfold Wharf? You must hold that wonderful picture in your mind. Can't you see her with her masts and yards towering above the old warehouses, and her tall bulwarks to remind you that she was built when privateering traditions were alive and captains still expected to repel boarders?"

Bravely attempting to divert her aunt, Angela ran to the library and returned with a fat, begrimed little volume, which she displayed with winsome animation.

"This will make your eyes sparkle," she cried. "I discovered it while rummaging on a second-hand book stall. Here is the most deliciously invigorating chapter, with the heading:

"Showing how to Prepare a Merchant Ship for a Close Fight by Disposing of their Bulkheads, Leaves, Coamings, Look-holes, etc.

"It was written in seventeen eighty-nine, but, of course, it belongs with all the exciting make-believe of our voyage. Now isn't this thrilling? Three pages are devoted to telling us 'How to make a sally.' It says:

"Having by a vigorous defense repulsed the enemy from your bulkhead and from cutting up your decks, it may be necessary to make a sally to complete your victory. But, by the way, the young master must use great caution lest he be drawn into some strategy to his ruin."

Angela flushed, abruptly closed the "Sailor's Vade Mecum," and gazed blankly at Miss Penfold. Apparently the same thought had occurred to both. The elder woman's eyes filled with tears as she said:

"But we have lost our 'young master.' Do you miss him as much as I, Angela? I have not dared to question you, but—but——"

"Yes, I miss him," was the quietly spoken answer. "But we have not lost him. You have sometimes laughed at what I call my 'impuncts.' They fly in the face of reason, but they are always true. The case against him looks utterly black, I know, but I feel that Stephen Fleming has done nothing to make us ashamed of him. And some day he may come sailing back to us."

CHAPTER V.

"WE'RE BOUND AWAY."

When at length the *Nautilus* was towed around to the harbor of her youth, Stonehaven began to take Miss Hester Penfold seriously. The voyage was no longer a fantasy. The brave ship, bright with fresh paint and gleaming brasswork, was a spectacle that drew crowds to the wharf and soon attracted the attention of the Boston newspapers. The Sunday editions shouted the tidings by means of conspicuous headlines, and reporters and photographers assailed the Penfold mansion. Its "rich and eccentric" mistress disliked such blatant notoriety, which shocked Sussex Street beyond measure, yet on the whole it was gratifying to know that the busy world be-

yond these narrow boundaries comprehended what she was trying to do. And when the venerable *Transcript* itself gave its editorial approval of this sentimental enterprise as well worth while, she felt that no more weighty indorsement need be sought.

The last weeks before sailing were prodigiously busy, what with a million and one details of equipment and cargo. Even the treasured log books of her ancestors could not always advise and enlighten Miss Hester. Angela was as industrious as she could possibly be, but her business training had been of the slenderest, and her head was fairly awhirl. Captain Chester Burdick was absorbed in fitting out his ship, while his comrade, Captain Claghorn, behaved rather like an insulted than a consulting master, and was too rheumatic to be sent on hasty errands.

In this stress of affairs, Ogden Haight made himself indispensable. He had inherited a shrewd turn for bargaining from his hard-headed forebears, and, although his talents had been more or less idle, he "rolled up his sleeves," so to speak, and bestirred himself to ransack the marts of trade in search of wares to fill the yawning hold of the *Nautilus*. He was a volunteer who won his footing by dint of hard work until Angela had to confess after a wearing day:

"All these bills, and manifests, and dickerings with so many people at once are entirely too much for poor me. Of course, it is part of the fun to do it all ourselves, but I am losing my wits, and there has been a wild and hunted look in your eyes for several days, Aunt Hester. Ogden is really our agent, and if you want to know what is going into that ship you must ask him."

"I really begin to respect him, Angela. It is most surprising. I verily believe he is a Stonehaven shipping merchant, born out of his time. And he was simply going to waste. He is fairly haggard and tired out, and he is doing it all with no reward, for you are no more than civil to him."

Angela's smile had the wisdom of the serpent as she rejoined:

"You cannot find the answer in those blessed old log books, but it is very simple, after all. Ogden is determined to sail with us, as supercargo or captain's clerk, or he would even ship as cabin boy on a pinch. And he has craftily taken one end of the business after another into his own hands, until you and I couldn't make head or tail of the tangle. It is awfully kind of him, but——"

Confronted by an obvious dilemma, Miss Hester appeared anxious, and asked:

"Is it an impossible idea? He would make a capable supercargo, it seems to me. And the responsibility will do him a great deal of good. I have been thinking that we should need another man of some kind, but I dismissed Ogden as a hopeless butterfly."

"It makes not the slightest difference to me," said Angela, with no more display of interest than if she were discussing an extra foremast hand. "He is fairly entertaining company, and I can promise you that he will work his passage. Do you really want him?"

"He has so manœuvred that I hardly see how we can do without him," replied Miss Penfold. "My grandfather's ships always carried a captain's clerk to attend to the details of trade with the natives of the Dutch East Indies and so on. But, of course, I am a chaperon as well as a shipping merchant, and the dual rôle is a novel one in my family."

"It need not worry your dear head the least little bit. I intend to flirt desperately with Captain Chester Burdick from here to the Cape of Good Hope, and 'thence taking our departure' for Batavia, I shall devote myself to Captain Andrew Claghorn. The captain's clerk will be kept in his place, never fear."

Could Ogden Haight have overheard this cruel mandate, his unwonted zeal might have somewhat abated. His hopes were masthead high, however, and his luxurious office in Boston, formerly the scene of a dilettante interest in the stock ticker, continued to be thronged with ship chandlers, provi-

sion dealers, export agents, and other emissaries of that sordid and vulgar commercialism which he had hitherto scorned. In duty bound, Angela conferred with these gentry, but their statements were bewilderingly technical, and after more or less half-hearted negotiations she would have to turn them over to Ogden Haight for that operation known as "closing the deal," which seemed to be a case of "every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost."

This useful young man achieved a fresh triumph of sagacity by instigating the Stonehaven board of aldermen to adopt by formal vote divers ornate resolutions in praise of the public spirit and loyalty to tradition of Miss Hester Penfold, who had "revived the fame of our illustrious port and thrilled every true American heart with memories of the glorious past." His honor, the mayor, presented this tribute in person. He had been elected by the suffrages of the populace which Sussex ignored, and, while the select company of patricians bewailed the fact that such things could be, the ward bosses, a low-browed set, with never an ancestor among them, did as they pleased with the town.

Miss Penfold loathed the sight of Mayor McHenry as he daily sauntered past her gate, a silk hat worn at a rakish angle, a very searchlight of a diamond in his shirt, his whole presence vulgar and commonplace. He was a walking profanation, a blazing reproach to the town whose first mayor had been that distinguished shipping merchant, Captain John Penfold.

She was gracious toward him for once, however, and how could she help it? Standing in the centre of her reception room he flourished the aldermanic parchment, and sonorously declaimed:

"When your noble ship sails out from our fair city every heart will follow you over the bounding billows. You are worthy of your honored name, madam. You are a successor of them —of those gallant sailors of Stonehaven who fit—who fought with Paul Jones; of those heroes that went from this town to man the guns of the *Constitution* in her bloody battle with the *Gorilla.* It is the spirit which made our forefathers shoulder their muskets and march to Bunker Hill. In the name of the city fathers of Stonehaven, I bring these greetings, and long may you wave."

Miss Penfold was quite overcome, and frowned at Angela, who was giggling disgracefully in the doorway. After his honor had departed with a sweeping bow, the girl stammered contritely:

"I didn't mean to be rude, but if he wouldn't dye his whiskers that stove-polish kind of shade, and—pshaw! the *'Constitution* and the *Gorilla!'* But he meant well, and Ogden Haight put him up to it."

"Then Ogden shall go in the *Nautilus,* and I intend to tell him so at once," cried Miss Hester, whose eyes were sparkling. "The mayor is an impossible person, but I am gratified by this official recognition. It is the voice of the people, and sentiment is not dead in this modern, unlovely Stonehaven."

That very day Ogden Haight was "signed" as captain's clerk, and as soon as ever the news traveled the length of Sussex Street, one eligible young man after another who had adored Angela Breck from afar called to tell her how valuable a member of the crew he could prove himself were he given the chance. Most courteously rejected, they wended their way to the club, and bemoaned their hard lot, and found common cause in damning Ogden Haight with much vigor as an underhanded, plotting scoundrel. Billy Truelove, from his favorite armchair, grinned sardonically, and told them:

"Haight makes you all look foolish. He kept his eye on the ball and toiled while others slept. You idiots thought nobody had any show to be the Johnny-on-the-spot except Fleming, the sailorman. And maybe that's true. I am no fortune teller, but if you want to read the cards, I'll bet the drinks you will turn up 'Trouble, trouble; dark man is coming over the water.'

Haight doesn't think so, however, and here's to a smooth voyage."

What Ogden Haight thought about the vanished Stephen Fleming was a secret which he could confide to no one. Perhaps the haggard appearance which Miss Penfold had sympathetically noted was not wholly caused by overwork in behalf of the *Nautilus*. An amiable, well-intentioned, and well-bred young man does not suddenly turn villain without more or less wear or tear of conscience. And to rip one's self-respect to tatters involves suffering, no matter how great the stake at issue.

Although Haight condoned his grievous slip from honor as resulting for the best interests of the two women concerned, there were times when he violently hated himself and wavered miserably on the brink of confession. But, alas, the intoxicating prospect of the long, long voyage with Angela could not be foregone.

Shortly before the day set for the departure, Miss Penfold said to her niece:

"Arthur has behaved much better than I expected. Suspension from college seems to have sobered him and made him more dutiful. Of course, when I knew that he must have read about the voyage in the newspapers, I expected to see him come tearing home and demand to be taken along. I hope he will be here to say good-by and see us off."

Angela appeared slightly puzzled as she replied:

"He has surprised me, too. Perhaps that experience in New York cured him of wanting to go to sea again. Now that his college examinations are over, he writes me that he wants to go West for the summer to 'slosh around,' as he calls it, on a classmate's ranch. I hate to leave him for so long, but Billy Truelove will be a sort of guardian. And Billy is a solid old brick."

"Arthur ought to stay in college, and besides, I am afraid the boy would get on my nerves if I were cooped up in a ship with him," confessed Miss Penfold. "He is so explosive and harum-scarum. It is another sign that I am getting old."

"He is safely disposed of, bless his heart," smiled Angela, although the tears started. "I shall be very far away from him, but I am quite sure he will be good."

The season was near the end of June. Instead of the riotous easterly winds which had whooped through the crazy old warehouses of Penfold Wharf in the early spring, the jolly summer breezes called to the waiting *Nautilus* to make sail and away.

The ship was ready to unfurl that tall and stately symmetry of canvas, like one cloud above another, which makes the square-rigged, deep-water vessel one of the most beautiful fabrics of man's handiwork. There was the magic, the mystery of the sea in the aspect of this *Nautilus*, East Indiaman, outward bound. In the harbor of New York or Hamburg she would have been robbed of much of this sentimental glamour, but here her presence lent to commerce an epic quality. She spoke eloquently of a closed era of high-hearted American achievement, of a pioneering spirit which had led the flower of American manhood into remote seas where no other nation's ships had sailed; that spirit which in later times conquered the western frontier and made empire in the wilderness.

Her first port of call was to be the Cape of Good Hope, because Miss Penfold's great-grandfather, forsooth, had found his way thither ahead of all other American captains, navigating by means of "a few erroneous charts and maps, a sextant, and a Guthrie's geography." His instructions had been to "sell rum, cheese, salt, and provisions, the proceeds of which he was to invest in Bohea tea." Miss Penfold hoped to prove herself worthy of this adventurous ancestor, although her trading must be adapted to modern methods and demands.

When the sailing day arrived Stonehaven was in a mood to celebrate the event as deserving popular approval. Captain Chester Burdick had been the

guest of honor at a dinner given by the Board of Trade, and his mates and seamen were pointed out in the streets as distinguished persons. As for Ogden Haight, the captain's clerk, he brushed aside the barrier of caste peculiar to the "old families" of Sussex Street, and conversed affably with the multitude which sought information, from the conductors of trolley cars to the groups of mill hands who wandered down to Penfold Wharf and gazed curiously at the *Nautilus*.

There was, of course, more or less gossip brewing over the teacups in the houses of the old families aforesaid. Indeed, it savored of scandal for Hester Penfold, at her age, to go wandering away to Heaven alone knew where in an obsolete sailing vessel with no other company than her slip of a niece, two doddering old skippers, and that gilded idler of an Ogden Haight. And unless she was bent on marrying Angela to this young man—well, that overworked word "propinquity" was fairly hustled into its grave.

With all its dignity of environment, Sussex Street was of a thrifty and prudent habit of mind, and something like consternation swept it from end to end when the report was noised about that Miss Penfold's "adventure" in ship and cargo had cost her almost *one hundred thousand dollars!*

The tide served at noon on the great day. Miss Penfold and Angela were early on board, ready to face the ordeal of innumerable farewells, and resigned to the prospect of being wept over by a small army of old ladies who expected never to see them again.

The ship had been cleared of all the disorder of preparation. On deck and aloft she looked as smart as a yacht. Captain Burdick had sought far and wide for his crew of genuine Yankee seamen, and, although few of them were familiar with square-rigged vessels, they were as fine-looking a ship's company as ever filled a forecastle. The living quarters aft, for the officers and passengers, were more spacious than formerly, and after Miss Penfold had come on board for a final inspection of the airy saloon and the large staterooms with brass beds and wicker chairs and bathrooms adjoining, she said to Angela:

"I intended to put up with the accommodations of the old ship, but Stephen Fleming planned all this. He argued that we were bound to use modern instruments of navigation and eat canned vegetables to avoid the scurvy which afflicted our ancestors, and why not take advantage of modern comforts, and plumbing, and an ice machine, and so on? He was so thoughtful. But I can never, never forgive him for breaking faith with me."

This was no time for argument, thought Angela, and she made no defense of the missing young shipmaster. He had been vividly recalled to her remembrance only the day before when Arthur Breck had come flying up from college to explain that he could not wait to see the ship sail, but must say goodby and return to the Yale-Harvard boat race, which was an event of more importance to the undergraduate mind.

The brother and sister had talked about many things, for they were to be long separated, and Angela told him the story of Stephen Fleming and how he had apparently disgraced himself in her sight. The youth, with unlooked-for discernment, had delivered himself of this verdict:

"He doesn't sound to me like the kind of a chap who would throw you down as hard as that. We fellows in college learn to size men up better than girls can. I'm awfully sorry I was the innocent cause of his giving you such a jolt. He must have been a good sandy lad, and I'll bet he was a corker in a scrap. If you find any more stray cousins of that kind send me word before they fly away in a cloud of blue smoke, won't you?"

Now, however, Stephen Fleming was banished from Angela's thoughts by the crowding incidents of these last hours in Stonehaven. Friends and strangers alike swarmed up the gangway to wish the ship Godspeed, the latter seeking such souvenirs as were not firmly nailed down.

Captain Andrew Claghorn had discovered in one of the old warehouses the battery of muzzle-loading cannon which had been mounted on the deck of an old Stonehaven merchant ship, and these he had ranged in the waist of the *Nautilus* upon rebuilt wooden carriages. He was bent on adding whatever verisimilitude might make the voyage begin handsomely, and these long brass guns, gleaming from square ports cut in the massive bulwarks, delighted Miss Penfold. Captain Claghorn gained much merit thereby, and was forgiven for his sulky behavior, which was charitably laid to his "rheumatics."

At the seaward end of the wharf a brass band, hired by the city, began to play lustily an hour before sailing time, its repertoire ranging from "Larboard Watch, Ahoy," and "Nancy Lee," to such roaring old chanties as "Whisky Johnny" and "Blow the Man Down." Small boys and girls were running to and fro, anxious for a last interview with Miss Penfold touching their precious "adventures" which had been duly catalogued by the captain's clerk. Promptly at noon Captain Burdick, red-faced and vastly important, hauled to the masthead the Penfold house flag, with the blue Maltese cross on the white background, which had been known aforetime to the ports and beaches of the Seven Seas.

All the tugs of the harbor forsook attendance on the coasting schooners and coal barges, and puffed and churned toward Penfold Wharf, every skipper eager for the honor of putting a line aboard the *Nautilus*. Captain Burdick waved them grandly away, and explained to Miss Penfold and Angela, who were holding court on the quarter-deck:

"There were no towboats when this vessel first went to sea, and I'm going to surprise these landlubbers. The wind is right, and I intend to make sail and take out her from dock just as she is."

The mill whistles were blowing for twelve-thirty, when he sang out to the first mate to send the men aloft. The sails were loose on the yards, and a lively breeze hummed through the stays. Presently the jib and foresail were set and the bow hawsers cast off, and the ship began to swing away. Her stern was still fast, and slowly she fell off, until her bow pointed toward the open harbor mouth, while the band played that lilting chorus which runs:

For the wind it is a-blowing and the tide is a-flowing,
And the good ship is tugging to be free.

For a week on end Captain Burdick had been drilling his men for this spectacular feat of seamanship. With magical swiftness the tall masts were clothed with white canvas to the top-gallant sails, and, as the last mooring was released, the *Nautilus* moved away from the clamorous wharf as a bird gathers flight with outspread pinions. Heeling slightly as she gained steerage way and veered to follow the channel, the bright copper of her shapely black hull flashed in the sunlight like a strip of molten gold. Presently a puff of feathery smoke gushed from a starboard port, and then another as the deck battery boomed a farewell salute to the home port. Soon smaller flecks of sail soared above the lower canvas, for Captain Burdick was setting his royals, and all Stonehaven, massed along the water front, beheld a sea picture as complete as it was possible to make it.

The town had dropped astern, and the ship was lifting to the slow-breathing ocean swell beyond the bar, when Angela Breck turned to look at the bright face of her aunt, and said with a smile and a sigh:

"It means a long, long exile, but we both love the sea, and I never saw you so happy. The fairy tale has all come true, hasn't it?"

Miss Hester softly quoted from the title page of one of the logs she loved to read:

"'Cape Ann bore west northwest, from whence I take my departure. So God send the good ship to her desired port in safety. Amen.'"

She glanced aloft at the Penfold

house flag, and then gazed with unfaltering, confident eyes across the blue ocean. She had answered its compelling summons, and was well content. Angela was looking back at the distant town and the bold headlands, which swam in a shimmering haze. Her lithe young body swayed easily to the gentle motion of the deck as she stood beside the seaman at the wheel. "Trim and taut," he described her to his mates in the next dogwatch, "no loose ends, and rigged all in white from her canvas shoes and duck shirt to a tidy little lid of a straw hat with *Nautilus* printed on it in gilt letters. And she didn't go to the paint locker for the bloom on her cheeks, you can gamble on that."

Ogden Haight, the indefatigable and conscientious captain's clerk, would have indulged in higher flights of rhapsody than this if his opinion of Angela had been asked. It delighted him merely to look at her in this romantic setting, and he felt that he had come into his reward. He was still a slave to duty, however, and was so busy setting things to rights at the desk in his stateroom that it was late in the afternoon before he found leisure to linger on deck. It is needless to say that he was carefully garbed to fit the part of the gentleman officer of a smart ship, and his double-breasted flannel coat of summer weight was nicely nautical without the furbelows of the smooth-water yachtsman.

He was about to move a chair to Angela's side when there was a commotion forward, and the hoarse voice of Captain Andrew Claghorn was upraised in angry upbraiding. Captain Burdick stumped toward the poop ladder, and descended nimbly for one of his girth. The sound of loud laughter from the region of the forecastle told him that the disorder was not serious. Ogden Haight followed at his heels, impelled by curiosity, after promising to hasten back with tidings to Miss Penfold and Angela.

Captain Claghorn had just emerged from a forward cargo hatch whence his voice had first arisen. In each hand he clutched by the collar a dusty, rumpled, dirty-faced youth, who squirmed after the manner of stranded eels and seemed to be begging for his life. Their captor was a martinet with a grip of iron, and, as if such episodes had been common in his career at sea, he dexterously banged their heads together by way of punctuating his heated remarks. As Captain Burdick drew near, he roared:

"Stowaways, drat 'em! Two of 'em! I went below to see that things were stowed all secure before the hatches were battened down. And these young pests came crawling over the boxes and grabbed me by the legs and asked me to show 'em how to get on deck. There's no sending them ashore now, Chester. Make 'em work their passage, the danged nuisances!"

The brace of stowaways must have been hidden close to a leaky molasses barrel, for they were exceedingly sticky and so debauched that identification was delayed. At length, Captain Claghorn dumped them on deck, surveyed them disgustedly, and observed:

"I wash my hands of 'em. They belong to you, Cap'n Burdick."

The taller and less disreputable of the two lads, if there was any room for choice, dug his fists in his eyes, grinned at the onlookers, and, nodding toward the captain's clerk, remarked:

"Hello, Ogden. Put me down on the passenger list, will you? There's nothing in this working-my-way proposition. You may run along and break it to Angela, if you like."

"Arthur Breck, you unspeakable scamp!" shouted Ogden. "You said you didn't want to come with us. Of all the—why, what in the world will your aunt have to say?"

The freshman picked himself up, made a feeble attempt to brush his clothes, as if it mattered how he looked, and waved a hand at his comrade in disgrace, who was malevolently eying Captain Claghorn. Haight followed the gesture, stared hard, and backed away, as if the sight were actually terrifying. In fact, he was too dismayed to speak, even when Captain Burdick asked curiously:

"Ever seen this ragamuffin before?"

Arthur Breck answered the query by saying:

"Sure. He has met Dick Mott before. Should auld acquaintance be forgot, Ogden?"

Dick Mott, late runner for Peg Moran's sailor's boarding house, scrambled to his feet, poked his fists in his pockets with an aggressive swagger, and muttered between his teeth:

"Go easy, kid. We framed it up to keep mum, understand? Pry him loose from the rest of the bunch, and get him over yonder, and we'll put him wise."

Arthur Breck beckoned Ogden aside. The crestfallen captain's clerk meekly obeyed, waiting only to say to Captain Burdick:

"Will you be good enough to tell Miss Penfold and Miss Breck that Arthur is aboard and will join them soon? I will explain matters to them in a little while. I'll get at the bottom of this."

At a loss to understand the singular scene, the captains twain went slowly aft, with many a dubious nod and whispered word. Ogden Haight's fright had been so genuine that they preferred to steer clear of the situation as beyond their ken. It was the sequel of some kind of queer business that had happened on shore, and like the thoroughgoing seamen they were, they meddled not with other folks' affairs. As soon as they were beyond earshot, Dick Mott pushed a path through the fringe of puzzled foremast hands, and led Ogden Haight and the other stowaway to the leeward side of a deck house, where they were wholly secluded.

"Now we will explain a few things," said the runner, whom the vicissitudes of a battering career had trained to meet any crisis with a bold front. "After you and me had that talk in New York, when I rung in Joe, the boatman—you remember, down in Battery Park, it was—I wondered a whole lot why you give us hush money. I ain't as old as you, but nobody ever tried to put me in a home for feeble-minded folks, and I don't recall buyin' any gold bricks. If you hadn't made that misplay I'd have forgot Mr. Stephen Fleming and you soon and plenty. But after a while I run across a piece in a newspaper, and Gentleman Steve's name was in it. And I says to Joe, the boatman——"

"Better show him the bombshell," put in Arthur.

Dick Mott fished from an inner pocket a page torn from the most flagrantly "yellow" of the New York newspapers. It contained a fantastic, leering sort of story of the voyage of the *Nautilus,* in which the reporter had built up a romance of the "idle rich." The heroine was the "beautiful young heiress," Angela Breck, and the tragic hero was the dashing sailor cousin, Stephen Fleming, who had been jilted, after which "he vanished as mysteriously as he had come." There followed several paragraphs of similar balderdash concerning the "aristocratic clubman" who had supplanted the youthful sea captain and was to sail with Miss Penfold and her niece as a particularly favored guest.

Dick Mott read aloud bits of this highly colored narrative in a halting, singsong voice, while Haight stared over his shoulder and miserably sought some way of escape from this hideous trap. Of course, the sort of people he knew would not pick up the New York *Enterprise* with a pair of tongs, besides which he had not dreamed of being on his guard for such a catastrophe as this. His wits were awhirl, and he dumbly waited for an explanation. The runner, whose hard features were more reckless than vicious, gazed whimsically at Arthur Breck, and vouchsafed:

"I read this piece in the paper, understand, and then I was dead sure that Mister Fleming had been double-crossed. He hadn't done no mysterious-vanishin' act at all, and you knew it, Mr. Haight, because Joe and me put you next. But you didn't give up, or at least that's how I doped it out at a guess. Anyhow, I wasn't easy in me mind, for ever since I batted him over the conk, I've been owin' Fleming a good

turn. To cut it short, I run up to New Haven yesterday to find this rah-rah boy here and see what he knew about it. He was packin' up his dunnage to shake the college and take in a boat race to-day, but he scratched his dates, and we had a swell dinner. He had the yarn fresh from his sister, how Gentleman Steve had got drunk in New York, and trun her down, and beat for the open sea with Colonel R. E. Morse on his back. And when I told the kid the straight story, he——"

"You were caught with the goods on," put in Arthur Breck, with a contemptuous glance at Ogden Haight. "I thought there was something queer about it when Angela unfolded the sad tale. Of course, she and Aunt Hester banked on Captain Burdick's word, but he isn't hard to bamboozle. I played too many tricks on him when I was a boy. So I knew that Dick Mott had the right end of it, and that you wanted to see this Captain Fleming disgraced. I was awfully shocked, Ogden. You didn't like it because I went to New Haven to college and you used to come over to the house and talk about 'Harvard gentlemen and Yale muckers,' but I always thought Harvard men were good sports. Why, you've queered your university."

The patronizing air of this insufferable youth was maddening, but the victim was given no time to rally, for Dick Mott chimed in:

"We didn't like your performance a little bit, and we decided you needed watchin'. Peg Moran and me had a run-in the other day, and I lost me job, and this ship sounded good to me. I've been one voyage around the Horn as an able seaman, and I says to meself that I can make good aboard this play-actin' vessel."

"And as the man of the family, I was bound to look after my aunt and my sister as soon as I knew there was crooked business aboard," said Arthur Breck with portentous dignity. "So we agreed to stow away, and came to Stonehaven last night, and slipped into the hold when the mate was below. It wouldn't have done to kick up a public scandal with you just before sailing. And as you were in charge of the cargo you had to go along or smash Aunt Hester's plans all to smithereens."

Cornered and temperamentally lacking in bravado, Haight's denial of the indictment was rather feebly phrased, and he could no more than stammer a threat to have the pair set ashore in the first steamer spoken than Dick Mott thrust forward his extremely pugnacious chin and fiercely retorted:

"Cut it out, or we'll throw *you* overboard. We don't want to spoil the fun of the voyage, for we aims to please the ladies, and they're thoroughbreds, all right. The kid and me will look wise and say nothin' to nobody till we get good and ready. So run aft and jolly the skirts, and we'll give you a chance to be a man and own up between here and Capetown. How about it, Arthur?"

"Right, ho, Dick. I'm going to pay my respects to the family."

"And me for the fo'c'sle and a session with the mate of this dandy packet," said the runner. "I ain't as ornamental as Mister Haight, but when it comes to deep-water sailorin' they can't do without me."

Arthur Breck bore down on the quarter-deck with nonchalant demeanor, Ogden Haight following reluctantly, trying to compose his features and steady his nerves for carrying the situation off with some kind of grace.

"Brace up, old sport," confidentially murmured the freshman. "Your knees are pretty wobbly. You weren't cut out for the part. I saw better villains in the ten-twenty-thirty shows on the Bowery, where Dick Mott first picked me up. We're not going to give you away, because we need to look the game over. And if Aunt Hester turns hostile and wants to ship us home, we can bank on you to stand up for us. You are in our power, ha—ha."

"Pshaw! I simply wanted to hear what you had to say," returned the badgered prisoner of circumstances. "This melodrama is all rot, and nobody will believe a word of it. If it

wasn't for making a disturbance, I'd kick you from one end of the deck to the other."

"Tut, tut, Ogden, you forget that I played on the freshman eleven, and you couldn't make a dent in Dick Mott with an axe. Now smile and look pleasant. Here we are."

Angela met her scapegrace brother at the break of the poop, and raised her hands in horror at sight of his besmeared face and clothes.

"You little wretch," she cried, yet she made haste to kiss him, molasses and all. "I shall turn you over to the captain for punishment. Of all the outrageous, unheard-of performances! What possessed you to do it?"

"Oh, I changed my mind at the last moment, sis, and you are really and truly glad to see me; you know you are. Stop your bluffing. I knew Aunt Hester's voyage needed a stowaway or two to give it the final artistic touch. I am pure romance, Angela, so don't scold. Where is the owner?"

"With Captain Burdick, on the other side of the deck. She will be angry with you, I'm afraid. What was the mysterious conference? Why didn't you come aft at once?"

"We wanted to win Ogden over to our cause," was the unblushing answer. "We knew we needed a friend at court, a buffer for Aunt Hester's wrath. We won him, all right. He is anxious to make us happy and comfortable."

"How nice of him, Arthur! I must thank him, for it almost broke my heart to leave you behind. What about college?"

"I can come home by steamer from the Cape and reach New Haven in September. Dick Mott worked it all out for me. Now for Aunt Hester."

"We never thought of that," smiled Angela. "You see, steamers do not exist for us. Such flaring anachronisms are barred from our reckoning. Don't be saucy to her, Arthur."

The sagacious youth had hit the nail on the head, for Miss Penfold was undismayed as he confronted her. Before he could beg humble pardon for his mad prank, she cried gleefully:

"I am not going to put you in irons. You need to be put in a washtub. I never thought of having stowaways, yet Captain Hosea Penfold found two of them on his second voyage to Maritius in seventeen eighty-nine. And, of course, they should be discovered in the hold of the *Nautilus*. Why didn't I think of it?"

"You couldn't have planned it in advance, Aunt Hester," soberly explained the youth. "Genuine stowaways have to be a surprise party, you know. I thought this little stunt would please you, so I sacrificed my visit to the ranch, much as I dislike the sea. And I brought Dick Mott along because he was once a real stowaway and knew how to play the part. There's no imitation about him. He is guaranteed under the Pure Food Act."

"You shall share Ogden Haight's room, which has two berths," said Miss Penfold. "And he must lend you some clothes."

"He will be delighted, I'm sure," and Arthur beamed with wicked joy. "I told sis I intended to go part way with you and then hustle back to college. I have a few clothes in a suit case. Stowaways usually carry their duds tied up in a handkerchief, but Dick insisted on the suit case to pack along some bottled beer and sandwiches."

Captain Burdick elbowed into the talk by asking:

"Seeing as you take it so calm, ma'am, shall I make the other one turn to with the crew?"

"By all means, and if he is a really qualified seaman, pay him full wages. I want no dissatisfied persons on board, and the young man seems to have the right mettle."

"Cap'n Claghorn will be considerably miffed. He believes in hazing stowaways and giving them a taste of eternal torment."

"He will be consulted when it is my wish, not otherwise," haughtily returned Miss Penfold.

Arthur Breck scurried below, and found Ogden Haight seated on the edge of his berth, his head in his hands, wrapped in dejection. Conscience had

made a coward of him, and the halcyon voyage had suddenly become a nightmare. Arthur closed the door, leisurely removed his coat, and impertinently remarked:

"Go get my suit case, if you please. I want to spruce up for supper. You'll find it on deck by the hatch. Now, don't look sulky, Ogden. If you refuse to fag for me, I'll tell on you. I am a horrid, unlicked cub and all that, but you'll have to put up with me as a roommate."

Glad of an excuse to flee these close quarters, the captain's clerk departed with never a word, and dared not think of what the morrow might bring forth. On the surface of things his plight had a touch of comedy. In truth, it had the essential elements of tragedy. There was never a man of such flaccid texture that he would not fight with his back to the wall. And Ogden Haight well knew that if Angela were convinced of his perfidy toward Stephen Fleming, she would forever abhor him. To the giddy-pated youths who had so goaded, and flouted, and jeered him, the adventure was more or less of a lark. They were playing with a full-fledged conspiracy, and reluctant to bring it to a climax any sooner than could be helped.

On deck, Miss Penfold and Angela walked slowly, arm in arm, chatting like happy schoolgirls. The scene was all their fond fancies had builded. The red sun was dropping into a tranquil sea that was ringed about by an unbroken horizon. There was no more land, only the majestic ocean everywhere. Under full sail the ship moved silently except for the sighing wash of the waves in her wake, and the subdued musical sounds overhead where the cordage strained to the pull of arching canvas and the blocks piped like birds.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The third installment of this story will appear two weeks hence, in the first October number; on sale September 10th.

TOO MUCH MONEY

JUDGE CRUTCHFIELD, of the police court of Richmond, Virginia, was trying to get at the cause of the great trouble between Andrew Washington Jackson, a negro, and Mrs. Andrew Washington Jackson.

"Now, Andrew," commanded the judge, "you've been trying to deceive the court, but you must tell the truth. Why don't you get on with your wife?"

"Jedge," replied Andrew, much affected, "dat woman bothahs me almos' to death. She always wantin' money. Fus', she ax me foh half a dollah. Den she ax me foh a dollah. Den she ax me foh anothuh dollah. She has to have too much money."

"But, Andrew, what does she do with all this money?"

"'Deed I don' know, jedge," confessed Andrew. "I ain' done give 'er none yit."

THE YOUNGEST SECRETARY ON RECORD

REPRESENTATIVE JAMES FRANCIS BURKE, of Pennsylvania, who has an exact taste in neckties, is one of the most popular men in the House. He began life as a newsboy, educated himself, and made his way in the world so fast that he was the youngest man who ever held the position of secretary of the Republican National Committee.

A Fine Dancer

By Max Marcin

Author of "The Nomination that Went Begging," "Real Diamonds," Etc.

When an unromantic clothing salesman becomes obsessed by "the grand passion" you may expect the extraordinary to happen. Max Marcin tells of an amusing case in point. These stories of real life are the best things of their kind you have read in a long time

WHEN Julius Levine, returning from a friendly chat at a neighboring table, beheld Sarah's hand—the one on which sparkled *his* diamond engagement ring—nestling comfortably in Herman Levy's unmanicured paw, he felt a pang, as of a sudden bereavement. As he gazed, at first incredulously with widening orbs, then with an angry scowl distorting his features, a feeling of bitter humiliation came on him, which he tried to overcome by making himself believe that his senses were deceiving him. But the two clasped hands sharply outlined on the white tablecloth permitted of no self-deception. The conclusion was inevitable that the Sarah on whom he had bestowed the two-hundred-dollar solitaire had submitted her palm to the tender caress of another; that she was an unconscionable flirt.

To announce his discovery of the guilty handclasp, Julius coughed several times and shifted his feet noisily beneath the table. But Sarah, absorbed in what the other was saying, had no ears for the coughing. Anger and mortification struggled within Julius. To be thus utterly disregarded by the girl whose finger glittered with the expensive token of his love, was beyond human endurance. He determined that such brazen conduct should not go unreproved.

Various acts of immediate reprisal occurred to him. But his wavering mind could not bring itself to anything that might mean the permanent loss of the girl he hoped to lead beneath the canopy. So he turned the current of his rage in the direction of the offending and offensive Mr. Levy.

"You snake in the grass!" he snarled, at the same time wresting the girl's hand from the other's grasp. "A man who would do such a thing ain't worth it he shall be allowed to live."

Levy regarded the speaker with an innocent air.

"What are you talking about?" he demanded. "Don't get so red in the face; it don't become you."

Julius gazed at the man opposite with an expression of injured friendship.

"How you can sit there and look me in the face, after eating at my expense, I can't understand," he rasped. "A man what could accept another's hospitality and then hold hands with his friend's girl would cut his brother's throat for a shilling. No, for half a shilling," he added after reflection. Then, as if to paint with one bold stroke the other's extreme shamelessness, he concluded: "Yes, he'd eat ham on the Day of Atonement."

At this last, blighting reproach, Sarah turned her big, black eyes protestingly on her fiancé.

"Shame on you!" she murmured. "How can you speak like that to a friend what you brought yourself to the table?"

The stinging reminder of his own rashness in introducing Levy only served to intensify Julius' ire.

"A friend!" he cried contemptuously. "A *chaser* (pig), that's what he is! No gentleman would do such a thing like he did it. I betcher all my friends is laughing at me already!" His eyes roamed about the eating house, meeting the derisive glances of a group of acquaintances at a near-by table. "What did I tell you?" he blurted at the girl. "Already they're saying what a sucker I was to get myself engaged to you."

Levy appeared shocked at this brutal outburst on the part of his friend. He bestowed on the girl a look of such tender solicitude, that, insensibly, her hand groped again for his.

"Julius," he protested, "if you were a gentleman you couldn't speak that way to a lady."

Julius, who had not failed to observe the interchange of glances between the couple, and whose eyes had followed the course of Sarah's hand, bent threateningly across the table.

"If I wasn't a gentleman," he fired back, "I'd hit you a punch on the nose right in the restaurant."

Sarah, eager to avoid a scene, sought to smooth her lover's ruffled temper.

"Mr. Levy," she said, "has acted like a thorough gentleman toward me. You left the table to talk to your friends, and while you were gone not one word did he say that wasn't nice. Believe me, he said nothing against you. I have formed a great respect for him. He's such a fine talker, and soon he'll be a lawyer."

"You got a respect for him!" sneered Julius. "Ain't you got no respect for my feelings?"

"Please don't talk so loud," she cautioned. "The people are all looking at us."

"Yes, kindly moderate your tone," Levy broke in. "It isn't becoming to raise one's voice in a public place." His own voice, modulated to a low pitch, had a soothing quality, in pleasant contrast to the irritated tone of the enraged Julius. "I was telling Sarah—Miss Bernstein," Levy corrected hastily, "that real love has a refining influence on the most brutal natures, when you interrupted me." He smiled in a superior way on Julius. "I was about to remark that a man who is lacking in the finer qualities is incapable of love in the highest sense."

"Never mind remarking about anything!" snapped Julius. "I know you've got a fine line of talk. But fine talk don't make fine birds, and if you think you can butt in with my girl by handing out a lot of *schmuss* (hot air) you've got another guess coming."

At this juncture Sammy Pincus, a sallow-faced youth with bulging eyes, thrust himself into the group. It being the prevailing custom in Morris Blotsky's Grand Street restaurant for acquaintances to mingle at the tables, he sat down uninvited by the side of the perturbed Sarah.

"You folks all going to the ball of the Young Folks' League?" he inquired. "It's going to be a fine affair, at Terrace Hall."

"No, we ain't all going to the affair," returned Julius. "I got something else on my brain besides dances. I got goods to sell."

"How about you, Levy?" asked Pincus, unmoved by the other's curt rejoinder.

"I regard all such frivolities as a waste of precious time," replied Levy, knitting his brow. "My studies occupy all my spare hours at present."

"Miss Bernstein, I'm sure, is going," persisted Pincus. "She's a member of the club."

"Oh, I always go to the affairs of the Young Folks' League," declared Sarah. "You see, Julius don't dance, so I have to go with some one else."

Pincus accepted the hint.

"May I have the pleasure of your company?" he asked. "I know Julius don't mind."

"For my part she can go with you," agreed Julius. "Anybody what can find pleasure in getting himself overheated in a hot hall and take a chance on catching death from cold, is entitled to be a fool. Only I ask Sarah she shouldn't request me to go along."

"I know how you hate dances, Julius, so I wouldn't insist on your coming along," said Sarah sweetly.

"Then it's all settled I shall take you," chirped Pincus, leaving the table.

Julius gazed with undisguised disgust at the retreating figure.

"That feller's got mush in his head, not brains," he remarked. "Of him I ain't jealous," he added, turning toward the girl. "He can dance himself into the grave, for all I care."

"It's disgusting to see a man devote his life to such inane amusements," observed Levy. He looked at his watch as though suddenly remembering a pressing engagement. "I've got to go," he said. "I enjoyed the dinner very much, Julius."

Before the sullen host was able to frame an adequate reply, Levy was headed for the door.

"He's such a fine talker," mused Sarah aloud, her eyes following Levy's form until it merged with the passing stream of humanity on the sidewalk.

"I suppose I deserve all I'm getting," fired Julius. "For four years I worked for your father. I should know better than to trust his daughter. A cutthroat like him couldn't even have a daughter what wouldn't insult her future husband in a restaurant. Yes," he went on with mounting anger, "if it wasn't that I was going to marry you I wouldn't have been working for him this last year."

Sarah regarded her fiancé in dim-eyed confusion.

"You shouldn't speak that way about father," she protested.

She wanted to say more, but the knowledge of her own guilty behavior restrained her tongue. "Come, let's go home," she suggested.

They walked home in sullen silence, each aware of a growing dislike for the other. But they managed to keep their feelings in leash, although for the first time since they had become engaged they did not kiss each other on parting.

The following morning Julius went to business, a feeling of martyrdom kindled within him. He had come to the conclusion that Sarah's love for him was a sham and a deceit; that he was tolerated by her only for the purpose of keeping his services in her father's firm. This belief was reënforced by the reminder that all his requests to have a wedding day set had been met with evasions; that Bernstein, contrary to the usual custom, had encouraged a long engagement.

"They're using me for a good thing," Julius said to himself, as he cast his eye down the long lines of sample coats; "but I'll make 'em come to a showdown to-day."

He walked to the other end of the loft, and, peering into Bernstein's office, observed that the senior member of the firm of Bernstein & Shapiro had finished with the morning's mail. Julius entered the office with an expression of deep resentment lurking in every line of his heavy features.

"Well, what's worrying you?" greeted Bernstein.

"I want to have it a talk about Sarah," answered Julius.

"What's the matter with her?" snapped the father.

"Just this much is the matter. I ain't going to be put off no more about the wedding. Either I marry her or I don't marry her! And if I marry her it's got to be before I start on the road. I ain't going away next week for three months and let her run around with that feller Levy." He regarded Bernstein with the defiant air of one who is not to be beguiled out of his resolve.

"What Levy are you talking about?" the girl's father asked.

"Herman Levy."

"You mean Simon Levy's boy?" Bernstein showed his quickened interest by stroking his coarse red beard nervously.

"I only introduced him to her last night," Julius whined, "and already they've got a liking for each other."

"You talk like a *schlemihl* (fool)," the father sought to reassure the young man. It was plain, however, that he did not share Julius' resentment toward the interloper. An inward satisfaction appeared on Bernstein's face which he tried vainly to conceal.

"Maybe I'm a fool," rasped Julius, "but I ain't such a fool as to stay engaged forever. If I don't marry Sarah

before I go on the road, then I don't marry her at all, and I don't go on the road. That's my last word, too!" He strode out of the office and busied himself with the line of samples he was preparing for his Western trip.

Bernstein gazed abstractedly out of the window, lost in contemplation of the engaging possibilities opened up by the information he had just received. When he returned to his desk, it was to look up Simon Levy's rating.

"Why is it we don't have our sponging done by Simon Levy?" he asked his parner, later in the day.

"No reason, except the Raritan Sponging Company has always done it satisfactory," replied Sam Shapiro.

"Well, I ain't been satisfied lately with their work," complained the senior member of the firm. "We'll try Levy for a while and see how we can make out."

"It's all the same for me," agreed Shapiro. "So long as he don't spoil the cloth, and don't charge no more than the other fellow, I don't care who sponges 'em."

"There's something else what I want to talk with you about," said Bernstein. "Y'know that feller Julius is getting worser every day. Already it's all I can do to tolerate him! He's had the nerve to tell me this morning that if he don't marry Sarah before he starts on the road then he don't go away next week."

"He's a fine salesman!" commented Shapiro, who saw a storm gathering. "Why don't you let them get married quietly? Then you won't have to give no elaborate wedding."

"And take him in the business as a partner!" protested the other. "For a long time I had it a good mind to break off the engagement."

"Don't do nothing rash," counseled Shapiro in alarm. "We'd have a hard time getting a good man right now, when the season is just beginning."

"Well, we got along before without him; we can get along again," declared Bernstein. "Anyway, I won't do nothing as yet. I'll wait and see how he acts."

Although Bernstein gave no hint of it, it was easy for the partner to guess that a more eligible suitor for Sarah's hand had appeared. Also, it was plain that the father was too cautious to discard Julius until he had made sure of the other's intentions.

"I wouldn't play no double game," he advised. "You might get the worst of it."

"My Sarah shall marry anybody she wants to," the father replied. "If she wants to change her mind about Julius she's got a right to. By the way, can you tell me anything about Levy's son, Herman?"

A great light broke on Shapiro. He regarded his partner quizzically.

"From what I hear of him," he said, "he's a fine young man. Levy's brother, y'know, married my niece, and she tells me Herman has already taken the bar examination. Compared with Herman, Julius is a kike. I shouldn't blame you for letting Sarah marry young Levy, but if you take my advice, you wouldn't play the two of them the same time. You might lose both."

The entrance of a customer prevented further discussion of Sarah's future. Shapiro, being the manufacturer of the firm, ascended to the loft above to look after the output of garments, while Bernstein busied himself with the buyer. The two partners did not discuss the subject of marriage again that day, but when the girl's father got home that evening he had a long interview with his daughter. And the following morning Simon Levy was informed that hereafter he would receive all the sponging business of Bernstein & Shapiro.

The ensuing week was a busy one for the betrothed salesman. Gathering and arranging his fall samples occupied his time to such an extent that he had little opportunity of visiting Sarah. Besides, he was still in a sulky mood, and he feared that to give further vent to his feelings would widen the breach between them.

So he remained discreetly away, craftily determining to force an immediate marriage on the day before he was

to leave New York. But on the afternoon preceding the ball of the Young Folks' League he witnessed Bernstein and young Levy having lunch together in Reitzman's café.

The sight rekindled all the jealous rage within him. A cold stream seemed to run over him, freezing his very arteries. He sank into a chair at the rear of the restaurant and listlessly ordered a meal.

Elbows on table, his pale face squeezed between two gnarled hands, until its profile seemed a grotesque image, chiseled out of the edge of his palms, he glowered unhappily at the two diners. They, unconscious of his presence, seemed to find a supreme joy in each other's company. The smiles which wreathed their faces added torture to Julius' anguished soul.

He gazed as if he meant to annihilate them with his glance; but his shrewd, calculating mind foresaw the futility of carrying out his vengeful impulses in the restaurant. He saw clearly that Bernstein preferred Levy as a son-in-law, and while he heaped silent maledictions on his employer, he determined not to be cheated out of his prize. Now that Sarah was slipping away from him, he wanted her beyond anything else in the world.

Julius noted that Bernstein, who ordinarily ate a frugal meal at noon, and never spent more than twenty minutes at the table, lingered more than an hour over his lunch. Also, he paid the check and then walked arm in arm with Levy out of the restaurant.

Julius remained a long time in gloomy solitude at the table, thoughts racing through his mind in tumultuous succession. He did not see Bernstein and his guest part outside the eating house with a final hearty handclasp, nor was he aware of the triumphant light which gleamed in the eyes of the girl's father as he entered his office and sent for his partner.

"Sam, congratulate me!" cried the delighted parent, when he had cautiously closed the door behind Shapiro. "Young Levy and my daughter is engaged."

"Does Julius know?" questioned Shapiro.

"Not yet he don't know," informed the senior member.

"I suppose you'll tell him when he comes back from lunch?"

"Not on his life," Bernstein retorted. "If I should tell him y'know what that sucker would do? He wouldn't go on the road. He'd leave us without a salesman for his territory. It's time enough for him to know when he comes back from the trip. Then we'll have time to get ourselves a new man for his place."

"I don't like such a way of doing things," said Shapiro dubiously. "But we can't afford to lose him now."

An hour later Julius returned to the loft and shuffled into the presence of the man whose son-in-law he expected to become.

"I seen you have lunch with Levy," said Julius timidly, but with an accusing note quavering through his voice.

"Well, what of it?" demanded Bernstein.

"I hope you ain't letting that feller cut me out with Sarah."

"Why are you worrying so much about him for?"

"Because if I'm going to lose Sarah I want to know the worst right off. Besides, I got an offer to go on the road for the Ideal Fashion Clothing Company, which is a high-class concern, and which has offered me more money. So if I don't marry her right off, you can have my job."

He noted the look of concern which crept into the other's face and left the office to give his words time to sink in.

Despite the confident air he assumed in the presence of the girl's father, he was possessed by the fear of losing the girl. At the same time he experienced a steadily increasing resentment toward Levy, whose conduct grew more and more reprehensible as the day wore on. On his way home from business that night he met Pincus.

"If you see Herman Levy," he raged, "better tell him, as you are a friend of his, to keep out of my way. If I should

meet him he wouldn't live to make no more love to my girl."

"Don't do nothing rash," counseled the man who was booked to take Sarah to the dance. "A girl what would act like she is acting with that feller ain't worth it to commit murder over. I heard it a rumor that Levy yesterday bought a diamond ring."

"Pincus," rasped the distraught lover, "I always regarded you as a true friend from mine. Listen! When you take her to the dance to-morrow night, I wish it you should question her about that feller. I'm going on the road for three months, and when a man's away he can't tell what's happening in his absence. If she regards a salesman what is able to make his four thousand a year as less than a would-be lawyer what can't earn his salt, then let her go with Levy. There's lots of good fish in the sea what ain't been caught yet. But I ain't such a sucker as to go away and let her marry that dog Levy with my diamond ring on her finger. I'd have a swell chance of getting it back after she was married, wouldn't I? So if I'm going to lose her anyway, I might as well know it before I go. That's what I want you to find out."

"All right, I'll try to accommodate you," agreed Pincus. "But if I was you, I'd wait a while and if she marries that feller, then from what I know about law, I should think you had it a good suit against him for alienation of affections."

"I wouldn't disgrace myself by going to court with that crook," answered Julius. "Either I shall get the ring or the girl before I go on the road."

After dinner that night Julius called at the Bernstein home, where he was informed that Sarah was spending the evening with friends and would not return until late. The parents were out, too, and the servant who imparted the meager information knew nothing as to where they were, or the identity of the friends whom Sarah was visiting.

In the hope of the girl's early return, the young man hung about the house for an hour, went to Blotsky's restaurant and poured his troubles into a friend's ear for another hour, finally returning to the Bernstein house to learn that parents and daughter had not put in an appearance.

The following afternoon he was equally unsuccessful in his efforts to see Sarah, but his hope was buoyed by the knowledge that at night she would be at the dance of the Young Folks' League. She could not evade him there, so he determined to go. But he arrived purposely late, in a hired dress suit, so as to make it appear he had changed his mind only at the last minute.

The hall was at its fullest and noisiest when Julius arrived. Nevertheless, he moved about briskly, with eyes alert for the girl to whom he was engaged. The music struck up a waltz and most of the promenading couples swung into the dance. He was about to sit down in one of the chairs arranged about the walls, when he espied Levy and the girl's parents at one of the small refreshment tables in a room leading off the main hall. He strode over to them, a look of dismay on his face.

"I thought you didn't care for such crazy amusements?" he said to Levy.

"I don't," replied the rival. "But this dance is being given for charity, so I thought I'd come. I didn't expect to find you here, though."

"I came to see Sarah!" blurted Julius. "Where is she?"

"She's dancing with Pincus," informed the father. He was visibly perturbed at the presence of the two men at the table. "Why don't you dance with one of the ladies?" he asked Levy, in an effort to rid himself of one of them.

"I don't care for such silly amusements."

"Julius don't dance, neither," the father remarked in an apologetic voice, "so you can't blame Sarah for dancing with somebody else."

There were strong interjections of assent from Levy and Julius, as if both were anxious to convince the father of their unconcern at Sarah's presence on the dance floor. A strained and desultory conversation was maintained at

the table until the music ceased, and Sarah and Pincus joined the group.

"You are such a splendid dancer!" the girl said approvingly to her partner.

"It's a delight to dance with you," he returned the compliment.

"I could dance with you all evening," she sighed happily. Then, as if observing Julius for the first time, she nodded pleasantly to him. "I thought you wouldn't go to a dance," she remarked.

"Not unless you're there," he made a bold effort at gallantry.

"I don't see what's the use of your coming," she returned coldly. "You don't dance, and you don't want to learn how. And Levy, too, sits here like a wallflower!"

The orchestra struck up a two-step, and simultaneously Sarah and Pincus started for the main hall. Pincus' face wore a bland liveliness, the expression of a man conscious of his popularity among women.

Julius and Levy felt a common gloom overcoming them and lost themselves in the border of men and women at the edge of the dance floor. Bernstein and his wife returned to their box on the balcony.

The finish of the dance found the two disappointed lovers darting among the now promenading dancers in search of Sarah. But she and Pincus were nowhere to be found. In front of one of the stage boxes Julius and Levy brushed elbows; they paused an instant and exchanged mutual glances of inquiry and distrust. Before they were able to proceed, Louis Goldberg had seized their arms.

"That's a couple of fine wallflowers you two are," Goldberg remarked, at the same time thrusting a business card into their hands. His own appearance was sufficient proof that he had not adorned the wall while the music was in swing. Perspiration was rolling down his cheeks, his collar was rapidly losing its stiffness, his shirt bosom was rumpled. "You ought to be ashamed of yourselves," he puffed; "what chance have you got with the girls if you don't dance? You'd better come to my dancing academy—the rates are reduced for the next three months."

"A man engaged in intellectual pursuits——" Levy did not finish the reply, for Goldberg had dashed wildly in the direction of another couple whose terpsichorean education had been sadly neglected.

Unable to find Sarah and Pincus in the hall, or out in the corridor, or in the refreshment room, Julius and Levy finally joined the Bernsteins in their box. For an hour their eyes swept the big hall, but not a glimpse of the missing couple did they obtain.

"Where they can be, or what they can be talking about, I can't conceive," said Levy, unable to restrain his uneasiness. "I don't see how an empty-headed fool like Pincus can appeal to a girl like Sarah!"

"That feller Pincus, I should break his head if he don't show up pretty quick with my Sarah!" exclaimed Bernstein. "He's got a nerve, anyway, to take up her whole evening. He'd better go out and learn how to make a living! A bum like him shouldn't even be allowed to speak with her."

Julius offered no comment. An explanation of Pincus' absence had suddenly occurred to him. No doubt Sarah's escort was adroitly questioning her about Levy, and would report the result to him. He forgave Pincus willingly for having found a secluded spot somewhere.

"I'll know soon just how much she cares for Levy," he said to himself. "And to-night I'll know just where I stand."

When at the end of the second hour Pincus and the girl had not reappeared on the dance floor, even Julius began to show signs of impatience. He was about to leave the box and begin a quiet search for the couple, when suddenly Goldberg loomed in the narrow opening that led to the corridor.

"I got a surprise for you!" he shouted to Bernstein. "Haven't you heard the news?"

Instinctively the occupants of the box felt that the news concerned Sarah.

Bernstein turned an apoplectic tinge.

"What's happened?" he gasped.

"Louis Asher just took Pincus and your daughter to Smilken's jewelry store in Grand Street. Pincus bought it a wedding ring, and the couple has gone in a taxicab to Jersey to get married."

"Marry that feller Pincus!" exploded the father. "Marry him!" He made a despairing gesture. "He has kidgrabbed her—that's what he done! Oh, let me lay my hands on him!" He extended his hands as if about to throttle an imaginary Pincus. "I'll murder him the first time I lay my eyes on him!"

"Louis, if this is a joke I'll make you sorry for it," piped Julius.

"It's no joke," assured the dancing teacher. "You can ask young Asher."

For an intense minute Julius and Levy regarded each other uncertainly.

"Married Pincus with my ring on her finger!" whined the salesman.

"Pardon me," corrected Levy, "with my ring on her finger."

Each of the men wore an expression of incredulity. Bernstein was groaning as though each palpitation of the heart brought a fresh twinge of pain. Mrs. Bernstein had sunk low in her chair, stunned by the unexpected news.

"What ring of yours could she be wearing?" demanded Julius. "I tell you she had on my ring."

"And I tell you she didn't wear your ring any more," Levy fired back. "It was ready to be sent back to you."

Further dispute was checked by the appearance of Asher, who was beaming exultantly as he approached.

"Sarah is married," he said, then stopped abruptly at sight of the scowling faces in the box. "I thought you'd be glad to know——"

"What I want to know is what sort of a diamond ring was she wearing?" broke in Julius. "Was it a blue-white carat-and-a-half stone——"

"She had on two diamond rings."

Julius and Levy turned anger-contorted faces on the seemingly stricken Bernstein.

"A couple of suckers we were to worry over a girl like her," pronounced Julius.

"But I don't believe they're married," cried the father with a sudden accession of hope. "What can she see in a feller like that?"

"He's a fine dancer," Goldberg ventured in praise of his friend. "What could a couple of wallflowers expect?"

"Anyway, she's got a husband," soothed Asher.

Julius and Levy, consumed with rage, started to leave the box, but an exclamation of surprise from Asher halted their footsteps.

"Here's Sarah!" blurted Asher.

Timidly, tremulously, trying to cover her confusion with a wan smile, she came toward the box.

"Well," shouted the father, "I can stand the worst!"

"I ain't married," she said, trying to control the clutch in her voice. "I changed my mind when we got to the ferry and made the automobile turn back."

A happy sigh came from the father. He turned expectantly toward Levy, but the young student only waved a repudiating hand. Next, the father sent an anxious gaze in the direction of Julius. But Julius was following Levy contentedly toward the door.

As the Bernsteins, father, mother, and daughter, were leaving the hall fifteen minutes later, they encountered Shapiro, the old man's partner, in the corridor.

"What's the matter?" the latter inquired. "You all look as if you was sick."

In a few pointed sentences Bernstein explained the situation.

"What did I tell you?" commented the partner. "Didn't I say that he what plays a double game is apt to get in the neck both ways."

PREACHING AND POLITICS

Doctor John Wesley Hill, the New York divine, is a hard political worker, and is as proud of his stump speeches as he is of his sermons.

The Smell of Powder

By Jacob Burton Frazier

The leading citizens of Bullseye have a fine illustration of the truth of Doc Adams' wise saw: "Don't ever set a man down for a coward till after you've seen him smell the smell of powder"

THE leading citizens came out of the White Swan saloon and filed slowly across the street to the post office. In a cloud of thick, red dust the stage from Casey rolled majestically over the hard, smooth street, and stopped in front of the Metropole Hotel to discharge its two passengers—William Harold and Bull, a dog. The leading citizens lost interest in the mail for a few minutes—that was a weekly occurrence—and stood gazing in wide-eyed astonishment at the man and the dog. The man's clothes, while no doubt the fashion in New York, were hardly consistent with the customary garb of the citizens of Bullseye. The dog, an English bull, wearing a heavy, silver-studded collar, looked fully as much out of place as his master.

"Good 'eavens, 'is throat's cut!" exclaimed Lord 'Arry.

The stranger had turned and was facing them.

"There you go, exposin' your ignorance as usual," sneered Humpy Smith, the sheriff. "Them red neckties is all the rage at Bryn Mawr."

Having finished the task of removing as much of the perspiration and dust from his face and neck as was possible with a pocket handkerchief, William Harold gathered up his bag and suit case, and, followed—at the end of a chain, unwillingly—by the bulldog, disappeared in the hotel.

Half an hour later, just as the leading citizens were lining up at the White Swan bar, Slim Peters came in, and, politely holding the door open for the stranger to enter, said: "Gents, allow me to interduce to you Mr. William Harold, of New York City. Mr. Harold, this is the leading citizens. Their other names you will find out later."

Mr. Harold came forward timidly. He felt like a prisoner at the bar, about to be introduced to the jury. The leading citizens extended the right hand of good fellowship, and Mr. Harold grasped it cordially.

A painful silence ensued. It had long been the custom in Bullseye for the newcomer to buy the first drink. Evidently young Harold was not aware of this. Slim Peters, acting as his escort, naturally felt that the great responsibility of enlightening the gentleman devolved upon himself. He prodded Harold gently with his elbow.

"They expect you to buy a drink, sonny," he whispered.

Harold turned very red, grinned sheepishly.

"Certainly," he replied; then turned to the others. "Have something, gentlemen," he invited.

The leading citizens had been standing back, with a show of aloofness, but they thawed instantly and lined up at the bar.

"Your pleasure, gentlemen," said Baldy Davis, proprietor of the White Swan.

Thus did William Harold, graduate of Yale and son of Millionaire Harold, of Wall Street, become acquainted with the leading citizens of Bullseye.

Never again was any one obliged to prompt him to buy, but, although he tried his best to be sociable, always

when in the presence of the leading citizens he seemed frightened, and more than once they had detected him in the act of looking covertly at their six-shooters.

"The kid's skairt of our guns," said Lord 'Arry one evening. The leading citizens were gathered around the cloth-covered table in the back room of the White Swan, where Jake Andrews presided over the roulette wheel, or, when a poker game was on, busied himself withdrawing from circulation, one by one, the little white chips.

"A man that's skairt of a gun when it's hanging down peaceful from your belt ain't got no business in Bullseye," Jake allowed.

"Do better runnin' a female seminary for young women," sniffed Humpy Smith.

"Accordin' to my way of thinkin', you gents is intirely too hard on the kid," remarked Slim. "He just naturally never seed a six-shooter till he come out here to Arizony," he continued, "an', of course, he's a little gun shy—like a bird-dog pup; but I reckon if any of us gents was set down suddenlike in the middle of New York City, we'd shy at the street cars an' automo—beels about as bad as young Harold shies at our guns."

"I'd kind of like to see Jake set down sudden in New York," said Doc Adams, the veterinary surgeon, chuckling audibly.

Jake Andrews, born on the "Staked Plains" of Texas, had never been north of the Mason and Dixon line, and the largest city he had ever seen was El Paso.

"I reckon 'e'd get about ten feet before 'e 'ad a scrap," grinned Lord 'Arry. Lord 'Arry was an Englishman who had come to Arizona a couple of years before. His correct name was Harry Wellington, Lord 'Arry being a nickname given him by Humpy Smith.

"Don't ever set a man down for a coward till after you've seen him smell the smell of powder," advised Doc Adams.

"Which same is mighty good advice," affirmed Slim.

"Good evening, gentlemen."

The door had opened so softly and the men were so intently interested in the game, that young Harold had entered the room unnoticed.

"I don't want to butt in," he apologized, "but it's pretty lonesome over at the hotel, and if I'm not in the way, I'd like to watch the game a while."

"You're as welcome as the flowers in May," caroled Shorty.

"Won't you set in?" Doc Adams invited.

Harold hesitated; and the others, with the gambler's instinct, knew that his fingers were fairly itching for the feel of the pasteboards.

"Come on in," Shorty insisted sociably, moving his chair to make room.

That night young Harold made more progress toward gaining the good will and friendship of the leading citizens than during the entire two weeks since his arrival in Bullseye.

Bullseye hadn't had a shooting scrape for so long that, as Bullseye Smith expressed it: "Times is gittin' durned dull an' civilized when an officer of the law ain't got nothin' better to do than to set around playin' cards an' drinkin' bad liquor."

It was well along in November, but the weather had remained fine until the last two or three days, when it had suddenly turned cold, and Jake Andrews was compelled to keep a fire going in the big drum stove in the back room of the White Swan in order to make of it a more inviting place for loafers.

This particularly blustery afternoon Harold, Doc Adams, Lord 'Arry, Humpy Smith, Jonsey, and Slim Peters were gathered around the table, enjoying—more or less, as they were winners or losers—a quiet game of draw. Bull, not being a gambler, was sleeping quietly in the corner by the fire.

Sitting with his back to the door, Doc Adams was dealing. At his right sat Jonesy, at his left Lord 'Arry, and opposite them were Harold, Slim, and the sheriff. Behind Harold stood Jake Andrews, taking the rake-off.

Suddenly a man came stamping nois-

ily through the barroom of the White Swan, and, unceremoniously kicking the door open, crossed the threshold, slammed the door behind him, and stood with his back to it.

The newcomer needed no introduction, for every man in the room recognized him. The others by sight, Harold, not having previously seen him, by the instinctive fear which crept through him, chilling his bones and turning his blood to milk. From hearing the others speak of him, young Harold had come to believe that no more dangerous man walked the earth than Badeye Perkins, of Horseneck.

Obviously Badeye was very drunk, for his face was mottled with blood, and his eyes were bleary. Ignoring the others, he glared over their heads, across the table at Jake.

"It's too bad I've got to disturb your game, gentlemen," he began smoothly, with a show of politeness, "but there's a skunk here I've come to settle with."

The two men were goring each other with their eyes. Every nerve in the room was tense. Slim glanced at young Harold, who was as white as porcelain.

"It was you I was referrin' to, when I was a-speakin' to the gentlemen," Badeye drawled, still glaring at Jake, "an' it's you I come to get. You miserable, black-hearted——" He spoke a phrase which in the West, when uttered in anger, spells "shoot," and the leading citizens as one man jumped to get out of line.

Harold still sat staring fixedly at Badeye. Slim cried a warning to him, but he did not hear. Jake reached for his gun; then *his* face went white. Bullseye had been peaceable for so long that that morning he had actually forgotten to strap on his holster. Just as Jake sprang for cover, Badeye fired point-blank, but through his boozy eyes he must have seen two Jakes and fired at the wrong one. Anyhow, he missed, and Jake got behind the stove just as Badeye fired the second shot.

Not to be baffled, Badeye started in pursuit. The leading citizens, discovering that Jake was unarmed, hastily lined up behind Badeye and commenced marching solemnly around the stove after him. It was a comical procession. Jake ahead, watching like a hawk, and doing his level best to keep the big stove between Badeye's gun and all parts of his body; Badeye next, vainly striving to get an open shot at some part of Jake's oscillating anatomy, and the others at Badeye's back—keeping as close as possible.

The stove stood at the back of the room, so close to the wall that they had to pass behind it in single file, and every time they came around there was a scramble to see which would get through first, no one caring to get any nearer Badeye's target than he could possibly help.

At sight of Badeye's gun, Harold had just naturally wilted down, and, as his body sank, it pushed back his chair, and he slipped noiselessly to the floor; then he made an attempt to get under the table, but in this he was only partially successful, and there, like the much-maligned ostrich, he remained—his head under the table and his body fully exposed. Bull, who, in his cozy corner by the stove, had been rudely awakened from dreams of home, was at the door scratching and whining to get out.

Five times the strange procession ambled slowly around the stove. Badeye missed two more shots. The sixth time around, just as the enemies were in line with Harold, Badeye caught a glimpse of a corner of Jake's hip, and hastily fired his two remaining shots. The first hit the side of the stove, and, glancing, hit Bull. The second cut a groove in Jake's pants and Harold's left hip. Bull expostulated with all the power of his lungs, and they were good ones.

One or the other, or both of those two last shots, produced an effect upon William Harold, like unto the effect produced by a sudden jar upon a quantity of nitroglycerin. He sprang back and up and around, all in one spring, and he lit fighting.

Big Badeye Perkins, of Horseneck, coming around the stove in pursuit of Jake, his gun clubbed in his right hand, met a Kansas cyclone, a den of wild

cats, and a kicking mule all rolled into one. Badeye struck out with his gun, but it was snatched rudely from his hand, and he got a smashing blow in the face with a bunch of bones that blinded him. Harold followed the first blow, delivered with his left, with a crushing blow from his right to the other's jaw.

Badeye staggered backward, and Harold followed, landing blow after blow, any one of which would have finished a man less game than Badeye. Harold had dropped the gun, however, as soon as he had got it in his possession, and was fighting with his bare fists. But he kept the big brute so blinded as he rained blow upon blow upon his unprotected face that he practically had him at his mercy.

Finally, as Badeye staggered backward, fighting the air blindly with his fists, partially stunned by a left hook to the jaw, Harold caught him in the pit of the stomach with a straight drive that sent him to the floor in a heap. Harold sprang over the prostrate body, and gave it a terrific kick in the ribs, but it lay quite still.

The leading citizens had stood watching Harold perform very much as they would have stood at a safe distance, and watched a cyclone playing old Harry with Bullseye—in silent awe.

Harold looked at them across the body of the vanquished Badeye.

"So that's a sample of your bad men, is it?" he sneered, prodding the other contemptuously with his toe.

Dropping his eyes, he gave Badeye one last disgusted look; then he wheeled, and, calling to Bull to follow, he marched haughtily out through the saloon.

Doc Adams was the first to break the silence, which was really becoming monotonous.

He stepped up gingerly, and, bending, laid his hand over Badeye's heart.

"Alive, all right," he volunteered, in a surprised tone. "Here, put him on this table," he commanded, gaining confidence as he found his voice. "And fetch some whisky," he ordered, catching sight of Baldy Davis standing in the doorway.

The others obeyed his commands, and a moment later Adams poured some whisky between the big man's teeth.

Badeye opened his eyes, and with a dazed expression on his battered countenance, asked: "Where in hell am I?"

"You didn't quite get there, but I reckon you was durned close," explained Jonsey.

Badeye rolled slowly over, allowing his legs to drop over the edge of the table, and raised himself to a sitting position, painfully.

"Where'd that young wild cat go?" he asked, after looking around and making sure his Waterloo was not present.

"Wild cat's right," grinned Jonsey good-naturedly.

"I guess he went over to the Metropole an' locked himself up in his room," interposed Slim Peters. "From the way he looked at you when he was leavin', I reckon he was most probably afraid that when you come to, he'd just naturally be compelled to set to and finish you off."

"Such bein' the case," put in the sheriff, "if I was in your place, I'd kind of meander out of town while I was all together. 'Cause the wild cat's liable to come back any minnit, an' I plumb refuses to be held responsible for your safety."

Badeye looked from one to the other. "You don't haf to rub it in," he said doggedly.

The sheriff handed him his gun with the injunction: "The city limits is just four miles from here—north, south, east, west, or straight up, whichever way you're goin'. Don't load that gun till you're durned sure you're across the line."

However, the sheriff's precaution was unnecessary, for Badeye was completely cowed. He shuffled out through the White Swan barroom, without even stopping for a drink, and, sneaking miserably across the street, climbed laboriously into his saddle and started for Horseneck—dejected, pathetic—a sober, beaten man. The leading citizens, having officiated at his departure,

turned back toward the White Swan. Naturally, after such a strenuous experience, they felt in need of a tonic.

"The drinks is on me, gents," remarked Lord 'Arry graciously. "And furthermore I want to withdraw the remark I made the other day regarding Mr. Bill 'Arold's valor. I was mistaken."

"I makes a motion," Jonsey broke in, "that we hereby elects Mr. Bill Harold a member in good standin' of the Leadin' Citizens."

"At times," said Humpy Smith, "Jonsey shows signs of human intelligence. I seconds the motion."

"Motion is moved and seconded," said Lord 'Arry; "all in favor of the motion signify by crookin' their right elbows."

Six elbows crooked, and six glasses of liquor were raised to six pairs of lips—Shorty Kent being absent and Baldy Davis not being allowed to vote.

"Motion carried," declared Lord 'Arry, "and I solemnly pronounce Bill 'Arold a member in good standin' of the Secret and Notorious Horder of Leading Citizens till death do us part."

"Seems to me Lord 'Arry's got that kind of mixed up with a marriage contrack," said Slim Peters.

"Reckon it don't make a great site of difference if he has," put in Humpy Smith; "it's about as nigh's we ever git to a marriage contrack in Bullseye. Doc," he added thoughtfully, "you'd better go over to the hotel an' see if Bill an' Bull needs any medical attendance. We'll be waitin' right here in the back room."

An hour later Doc Adams returned and reported: "One bullet creased Bull's neck, and tuther made a little flesh wound in Bill's leg, but he hadn't even took the trouble to examine it. What do you think young Bill Harold was doin' when I went up to his room? Settin' there on the edge of the bed oilin' up one of them new-fangled automatic pistols! I fin'ly got him to let me examine his leg, an', after I'd got it all fixed up, he says:

"'Doc,' says he, 'I've had this gun hid in the bottom of my grip ever since I come out here—afraid to carry it. I thought not carryin' a gun was about the same as carryin' a flag of truce—that is, I'd figgered that nobody would be likely to shoot a man if he was unarmed.'

"He dug down in his grip an' pulled out a ca'tri'ge belt an' holster. 'I see you've changed your mind,' says I, by way of keepin' him goin'. 'I sure have,' says he, grinnin' sheepish, like the joke was on him. 'Back in New York,' says he, 'they think that out here in Arizony a man dies every time a gun goes off; I thought so, too,' says he, 'until to-day, when I seen Badeye shoot six times in a room twelve by sixteen an' never hit nuthin but a bulldog an' an innocent spectator. Badeye,' says he, 'has been cracked up to me ever since I've been here as bein' the Bad Man from Borneo. Bad man, shucks!' says he, 'he'd last about as long on the Bowery as a little woolly lamb in a den of wild cats.'

"'You don't aim to shoot Badeye up, do you?' I asks casual. He was takin' aim out of the window at a tomato can that was a-layin' on the prairie, out about sixty yards back of Ma Brigs'. He pulled the trigger, an' the can bounced about ten feet in the air. 'Say, Bill! You can shoot, can't you?' says I. He looked at me smilin' kind of funny. 'Oh, yes,' says he, 'I can shoot some, I used to take this thing down to the shootin' gallery back home,' says he, 'an' I could generally hit a half-inch bull's-eye seven times out of ten at fifty feet, but I'm sort of out of practice now,' says he, as he let drive an' hit that can again. 'No,' says he, 'I ain't got no intention of shootin' Badeye, if he 'tends to his own business. 'But,' says he, looking at his hands, which were all skinned up, 'I bunged my knuckles up somethin' awful,' says he. 'I won't use *them* on him again.'"

"All of which proves my former expressed opinion," remarked Slim Peters, "that Bill'd make good as soon's he got used to the Western mode of fightin'."

Coals to Newcastle

By Rupert Hughes

Author of "The Honor of a Thief," "The Great Cinematographic Crime," Etc.

You've heard about the too ingenious lariat thrower who tied himself in his own rope. Something of that kind happened to Mr. Dirk Memling and his remarkable aggregation of "pals," following the great cinematographic robbery which you read about a few weeks ago

DIRK MEMLING'S delight in exchanging the dilapidated half of a stolen and despised rug for three thousand dollars, was almost ruined by his tormented desire to know what had given the rug its amazing value in the eyes of the shabby Armenian who bought it.

Curiosity gnawed on Memling's heart like an etcher's acid biting a copper plate. But the Armenian had gone as mysteriously and as irretraceably as the rug he worshiped and ravished away. The only proof of the transacton was the lump of governmental paper. The bills were very dirty and very soggy, but very real.

Memling washed his hands every time he handled them. They did not affect his conscience so unpleasantly. His cronies, Slinky Green and Nellie Gaskell, were so overjoyed at the sudden rush of money to the vacuum in the treasury that they never worried a whit over the rug's further history, past or future.

"De main t'ing," said Slinky, "is dat I swiped it offen old Van Veen's floor and you passed it on to a guy what done a disappear, leavin' behind a haystack of long green dat has all de aroma of new-mown hay. We got it for next to nothin', and we sold it for more'n a good deal; and dat's what I call friendly finance. Forget de rug, Mr. Memling, and pass on to de next article of swag. In de woids of de auctioneer, 'Goin'—goin'—went! to de guy from Armenia.' Next, ladies and gents, I wanta call your attention to a coupla dozen udder master woiks of paintin' and sculpcher by—who t'ell is dey by?"

Memling smiled at his enthusiasm.

"Those canvases are by Terborg and Van Mieris, and those two statues are by Carpeaux and Dubois."

Slinky shook his head over the hard words; but the spirit of joy was at large within him. He mounted the model stand and imitated the hoarse minstrels of the auction shops.

"Step up close, ladies and gents, and make sure dat dese canwases is hand painted. Dese dagoes has hard names, but dey could wopse a brush around sumpum grand. We have here a landscape by Mister Chauncey Toiboig, de champeen lightweight brush wrastler of Williamsboig. De scene represents George Washin'ton crossin' de Harlem River, taken by Mister Toiboig's own movin'-picture machine and colored by hand. After dat I will ast youse to kindly bid on Mister Hoibert Van Smear's portrait of 'Wenus takin' a bat',' and next comes a coupla statutes by Monseer Carpoo and Dooboy, representin' nuttin' in pertickler, wit' nuttin' much on. And now we retoin to de Toiboig pitcher. How much am I bid? Do I hear a million bones for a starter? I'm listenin'—do I hear it?"

Those were great days in the studio. The three thieves had reached the heights of rapture. They had sold part of their loot for a high price. They had a mass of other loot whose value Hope, the auctioneer, rated at a fabu-

lous value. They had cheated their comrades in crime of their fair share, and they had the final bliss of terror lest at any moment the detectives might pounce upon them and prevent them from enjoying the fruits of their toil.

Their anxiety was increased by the knowledge that Gold-tooth Lesher, Short-arm Clary, Snubby Nettler, and the others who had assisted in the great cinematographic robbery were spending their share of the swag in riotous living and in the consumption of expensive and unusual wines which would render them irresponsible, conspicuous, and talkative.

What secrets those loose tongues might betray in their boastful bravado, who could tell? Who could tell into what treacherous ears those garrulous mouths might pour the story of their exploits? Memling had given them only a part of what he had promised them, but his only remorse was that he had not given them even less.

The more they pondered the uncertainty of their concealment, the more eager the three cronies were to dispose of the greater treasures remaining and flee from danger. As they estimated it, they would realize money enough to keep them all in luxury for years. Slinky was for a trip to South America, but Memling longed to return to Europe with its art temples and its precious atmospheres so congenial to his soul.

Discretion cautioned unusual care in every step, but success intoxicated them to rashness. Their assets were liabilities, until they were turned into cash. How was that to be done?

Slinky eventually sweat out an idea, but he would not disclose it until he had tested its value. He said he would be out of town all the next day. Memling had no schemes at all. The great empty studio would have seemed to be an ideal place for meditation, but its very cavernous silence bewildered his mind. Being a city soul, he found that his truest solitudes were to be attained in a crowd. He could think best in a clatter. After a night of restless tossing and vain cogitation, and a morning of no better success, he decided to take his luncheon at his club.

II.

Though the Mummers Club had its origin as a meeting place of stage people, so many editors, magazinists, artists, and art critics had flocked to it that it had become a cuckoo's nest of everything that was not dramatic.

There was a club saying:

"The best thing about the Mummers is that you never meet any of those actors there."

The club had achieved what the millennium promised. In its luxurious Eden the literary lion and the editorial lamb sat down together, the artistic leviathan and the swordfish critic swam at peace.

One of the best-liked members was Dirk Memling. Nobody there imagined that he was a thief by trade. He was known to be a sculptor of gifts, and his talents were romancified by the melancholy veil of his early tragedy. Time had sweetened it into a legend whose pathos had become poetry, an elegy of art.

He was pointed out to visitors as one of the landmarks of the club, and his story was told in whispers of awe. The story ran that, many years before, he had won a commission to execute a pediment group for a new State capitol and had begun his work with supreme ambition and success, when all projects were stopped by the exposure of huge graft in the construction department with its side door into politics. The capitol had been completed, but over the forest of columns where the Memling group was to have stood, yawned a huge triangle—an empty sepulcher of hopes.

The visitors were informed that Memling's heart was bankrupted with his purse, and he did no more great works. How he lived nobody knew, for he never exhibited anything. It was surmised that he gained commissions for portrait busts or for interior decorations of rich men's houses—for these were the bread and butter of most artists; the sculpture and the easel

pictures that won notoriety at the galleries being usually no more than a man's press work, his publicity exploitation of himself.

But no one questioned Memling, and he found in the club a haven from his association with the illiterate and uncouth partners in his true livelihood. At the Mummers the talk was literary and artistic, and Memling could hold his own with the best of New York's conversation experts.

On this day he preferred not to talk. He chose a small table in a corner overlooking the garden. The chatter of the other members made a pleasantly murmurous background like a distant surf, and the *plat du jour* was corned beef and cabbage, a light New England refection which he had found strangely conducive to free thought—possibly because it kept his internal mechanism so intensely busy that it left his mind full play.

He was just acquiring a few shreds of ideas that promised well, when Herbert Haslam, a caustic art reviewer on one of the daily papers, came up, and, indicating the empty chair, asked what is technically known as a foolish question:

"Are you alone?"

"Very much," said Memling.

"May I join?"

"Delighted," said Memling—who was not delighted at all, for Herbert Haslam was known as the "Terrible Talker," the "Champion Chinner of the Club." A town wit had once put a placard on one of the club doors, "Exit in case of Haslam." Haslam talked wisely, but too well, too much.

Memling resigned himself to an avalanche of words. They would come from the heights, but they would come in avalanche. To-day, however, Haslam was not at all himself. He was amazingly silent. He murmured:

"It's a nice thing about this club, that a poor wretch of a critic can meet you men who are doing things and show you that he is human."

Memling answered: "Especially if he learns incidentally that his victims are human, too."

Haslam smiled sadly.

"Victims? I never roasted anything of yours."

"You've never had the chance," said Memling.

"That's so. Why don't you exhibit?"

"What's the use?"

"You do private work mostly, eh?"

"Private work exclusively."

"What are you doing now?"

"Resting. I've just finished a millionaire."

"Indeed. Who was it?"

"I don't like to boast."

"Gad, but you are modest. A sort of confidential sculptor to the rich, eh?"

"That's one way to put it."

Seeing that Haslam was in a reticent humor and evidently suffering from some distress, Memling flattered himself that he would get off easily. He hastened to order his coffee and cheese with Bar le Duc.

But just as he was hurrying them down, who should stroll up but Clifford Girdlestone. He was dragging a chair after him. He was another who did much talking—he had little else to do.

"May I join you?" he asked; and Memling answered:

"As one of the few surviving actors in the club, I suppose we ought to treat you kindly. What'll you have?" Memling was standing treat lavishly these days, being in funds.

"A green mint," sighed Girdlestone.

Like an echo came a sough of despondence from Haslam.

"What's the matter with you two men?" said Memling. "Have you both been to Woodlawn?"

Girdlestone groaned: "You'd sigh, too, if you were an actor in the worst season in stage history."

Memling smiled incredulously. "So far as I can judge from the theatrical wails, every season is the worst in theatrical history."

"This one really is. For thirty weeks last year I played at good salary. This year I was in three failures, rehearsing nine weeks in all, buying three hundred dollars' worth of costumes and playing exactly five weeks on salary out of the fifty-two."

"How do you keep from starving?"

"I don't," said Girdlestone dismally. "I've been dead for three months."

Haslam, being of an analytical nature, asked:

"What's the cause of the theatrical slump?"

"Moving pictures!"

Memling started. His own performance with the cinematograph was too fresh in his past to be a matter of easy thought with him. He managed to ask:

"What have moving pictures to do with—I believe you call it 'the legit'?"

Girdlestone answered with a roar: "What have potato bugs to do with potatoes? What did poison have to do with the death of *Hamlet's* father? They're killing the drama, that's all." He thumped the table so hard that he jiggled half of his mint essence out of the glass thimble. He regarded it with enlarged sorrow.

Haslam groaned a deeper groan, and said:

"Moving pictures have been my ruin, too."

Girdlestone, almost with professional jealousy, glowered at Haslam:

"How could the devilish things affect you?"

"Well, you see it was this way. Old Roger Van Veen, the millionaire, had a big art collection up at his summer palace in Ucayga. I was asking him what he had there, and he said he didn't know. He has two or three homes so full of masterpieces he doesn't know half of them by name. I told him he ought to have a catalogue made of them. I described the artistic volumes that some of the millionaires have had privately printed, and I told him that I myself had made the catalogue of the art treasures of Richard Bamfield."

"The big gambler?" from Girdlestone.

"The big gambler," said Haslam. "So old Van Veen got jealous and decided that he must have the most artistic catalogue ever printed. He asked me what I would charge to compile the book. I set a fancy price, and he nabbed it."

Girdlestone grew impatient: "What's all this got to do with moving pictures?"

Haslam explained:

"Just as I was packing up to go to Ucayga, along came a band of thieves with an alleged moving-picture machine and pretended to take pictures round the place. They got the watchman in their toils, sent him a fake telegram from Van Veen admitting them to his palace, and once they were inside, gagged and bound the watchman, stuffed him into Van Veen's soundproof sleeping room, and carried off the art treasures one and all—even to the rugs."

"The blackguards!" roared Girdlestone. "It's just like those moving-picture fiends. They'd do anything!"

Memling was flushed with excitement. His crime sounded rather ugly as described by an outsider. He gulped another cup of black coffee before he found nerve to ask:

"Haven't they arrested the robbers yet?"

"Not yet," said Haslam. "They've got all the public and half the private detectives after them. They'll catch them eventually. But meanwhile the scoundrels have stolen my job away from me. And I had planned to take my wife and kiddies on a fine vacation on that money. Now, we'll stick in this hot town all summer."

Memling realized with a sickening at the heart how far-reaching and deep-ramifying are the evils and hurts that follow crime. He felt a flash of impulse to confess to Haslam:

"I'm the moving-picture fiend myself. I've got most of Van Veen's pictures, and statues, and rugs in my possession. Take them back and go ahead with your old catalogue."

It was a beautiful impulse that floated into his heart—white as a snowflake. It lived just about as long. Memling realized at once how intricately he had tangled a dozen of other souls in his crime, men like Slinky, and Gold-tooth Lesher, and Short-arm Clary, and the girl, Nellie Gaskell, and others who had trusted him and whose exposure would be a peculiarly ugly treachery.

So the beautiful impulse melted and left no trace. Haslam had paid no attention to Memling's preoccupation. He and Girdlestone were exchanging curses against the moving-picture craze and all its demons. Memling left them to their anathemas and went his way. He walked the park through and through trying to work out a plan for selling the loot safely, but ideas evaded him like the sparrows, fluttering about his head and feet, but refusing to be captured.

That evening he returned to the club for dinner. Haslam and Girdlestone were still there. They had adjourned to the barroom, and were supporting each other against its ledge, while they thickly described to the amiable barkeeper what evils the moving pictures had wrought in a hitherto peaceful world. They were both talking at once, and there was hardly a fault to be found with existence that they did not blame to the moving picture—the devil's own machine, the cinematograph—or "shinnymassograss"—as Girdlestone was pronouncing it by now.

The barkeeper went on polishing glasses, and with the perfect courtesy of barkeepers, murmuring "Yes, sir," and "That's so, sir," every now and then.

Memling left the twins of misery to their own bitterness and went up to his dinner. The small tables were all filled. Garrod, the painter, beckoned him to an empty place next him at the long table. A number of strange faces were there, but the conversation was general, as usual, and, as usual, no introductions were made—except perhaps to one's elbow neighbor. It was assumed that everybody present was a member, or a member's guest.

Eventually the talk drifted round to paintings, and the names of various old and new masters were ping-ponged about. One small elderly and unimportant-looking man whom Memling had not seen there before took a lively interest in the conversation, but seemed to rate the painters chiefly by the prices they had brought at the latest auctions.

Garrod leaned close to whisper in Memling's ear:

"That old dub seems to run a sort of Bradstreet's for old masters. Who is he, anyway?"

"I didn't get his name," Memling whispered back.

After dinner the group gradually dissolved and reassembled in the lounging room; the names of great painters were bandied about with the prejudices and the familiarities with which the general public talks of famous ball players or prize fighters.

"I think Rembrandt is a fine painter," said the dapper little stranger, as if he were uttering a new thing. "I have several examples of his work."

"Are you sure?" said Garrod cynically.

"Of course, I'm sure. Didn't I pay big prices for them?"

"That proves nothing," said Garrod. "It is estimated that there are thirty thousand forgeries of Rembrandt in existence—mostly in America."

"Good heavens!" gasped the stranger. He looked as if some one had told him that the subtreasury had gone into bankruptcy.

Garrod said: "I don't care so much for the big fellows that everybody knows and copies. I prefer some of the old masters that the man in the street never heard of—the little Dutchmen for instance—like Terborg and Van Mieris and——"

"They were mighty big little Dutchmen," said Memling.

"They were giants in miniature," said Garrod. "Why, Van Mieris could paint a glow of sunlight shining into a little room or a little hall just seen through a half-open door, and you'd want to cry, it was so beautiful; and Terborg could paint a pair of boots, or a forearm, or a woman's back hair, or a piece of plain wall so marvelously that you couldn't tell which of them had the most soul. Isn't that so, Memling?"

Memling said that it was so.

The dapper individual gasped: "Indeed! I don't think I have any of their works. Are they to be had in this country, do you suppose?"

Garrod exclaimed: "He doesn't think he has any of them! Imagine owning a Van Mieris and not knowing it!" Then he dropped the inhospitable sarcasm. "Yes, they turn up in the market now and then. They're pretty safe purchases, because the forgers and imitators and fakers haven't paid much attention to them. Isn't that so, Memling?"

Memling agreed that it was so.

"I wonder where I could get some of them," said the stranger with an almost miserly cupidity. "I must put my agents in the track of them."

Garrod went on from rapture to rapture as if he were trying to steal Haslam's reputation for conversation, and occasionally turning to Memling to confirm him.

Memling answered almost absently, for his mind was in a whirl. Here perhaps was the very man he was looking for—come right to his hand, ready to eat out of it. He was a man of such evident means and such evident avidity for art treasures, and he seemed to know so little of these master workers, that Memling decided to sell him Roger Van Veen's art works if he had to put a pistol to his head.

Memling grew hungry as he visioned the large sums he might get from this person, but the element of danger was great, for the man might be a friend of Van Veen's, or he might call in experts to verify the authenticity of his purchases, and these experts might ask awkward questions as to the pedigrees and travels of these paintings. For such records are kept like the records of other blooded stock. But this risk had to be taken with anybody he approached.

As Memling was urging himself to grasp the chance, risk and all, the stranger looked at his watch and announced that he must go. He said laughingly that he was a charter member of the club, but had not been there for ten years. He belonged to so many clubs that he had forgotten his membership in the Mummers. He seemed to have so much of everything that he could remember nothing.

As he moved from the clump of men, he bowed with respect to Memling, whose name he had heard invoked several times as an authority.

Seeing his victim about to escape and to escape anonymously, Memling was seized with a sudden resolution. He rose, and, following the man, halted him at the head of the stairs.

"Excuse me," he said, "but you expressed a desire to possess a Terborg or two, and some Van Mierises."

"Yes."

"I happen to know where you could lay hands on some of them."

"Really! You interest me immensely. Are the pictures yours?"

"Yes—no—that is, they belong to a poor widow of my acquaintance. You could make a good bargain and do an act of charity at the same time."

"I'm overrun with appeals for charity," said the man, with a snapping of the lips like closing the thin lids of a watch. "But I should like to see the pictures, Mr.—Mr.—Memling, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Where could I see them, Mr. Memling? At the home of the—widow, didn't you say? Who is she? Where does she live?"

Memling sparred for time. "I could let you know later when I have found out just when it would be most convenient for you—and the—the widow."

"Very good. Just telephone me, will you?"

"Certainly. Where could I reach you?"

"My number is in the book."

"Oh, of course. But—it's very stupid of me—I didn't catch your name."

The old man looked rather miffed, as if every one ought to know his name. Somewhat chillily he fumbled for his cardcase, and as he poked a pasteboard at Memling, he said almost testily:

"Let me hear from you soon. I sail for Europe at the end of the week. Good night, Mr. Memling."

Memling took the card, and murmured "Good night!" Then he glanced at the white square. It slipped from

his hand, and his startled eyes read the legend:

MR. ROGER VAN VEEN.

III.

When Memling reached the studio he was covered with cold sweat and shaken with a chill. He had offered to sell Van Veen's stolen pictures to Van Veen himself. The man had acted like an ignoramus—but was he one? Van Veen had been shrewd enough to heap up a fortune of millions, to buy yachts, and houses, and house boats, and masterpieces. He could not be anybody's fool. Perhaps he had been shrewd enough to pretend ignorance of his stolen Terborgs and Van Mierises in order to gain a clue to them. His whole policy since the robbery had been one of hermetic secrecy.

Memling had gone to him with an amateurish story of a widow and a lot of valuable art works. Could a man of such intelligence have been duped? He would soon know. Van Veen knew Memling's name. He could learn more of him at the club. He could learn of his mysterious life, his invisible means of support. He could learn his address. Even if Memling kept away from Van Veen, Van Veen would undoubtedly hunt up—or hunt down—Memling.

The sculptor-thief cursed himself for a fool as well as a knave. In the face of exposure and shame the cleverness he had flattered himself upon turned sour on his stomach. He felt like the too ingenious lariat whirler who ties himself in his own rope. He thought of himself as one of those over-ingenious persons whom boys ridicule as a "smart Alec."

He found his studio empty of people, but full of terrors. Of all times he wanted least to be alone now. He lighted every light. The glare frightened him more than the dark. He switched the lights all out again.

The bell rang, and his heart swung like an alarm in a belfry. He dared not go to the door lest he admit some gruff official who would say:

"Well, Mr. Memling, we've come for you."

He cowered in his easy-chair, his cigarette tremulous on his quivering lips. The doorknob turned, and he sat palsied. The incomer was only Nellie. Getting no answer to her ring, she had let herself in with her pass-key.

Hungry for company in his misery, Memling told her what he had done. She agreed that he was a fool—but a dear fool. She loved him all the more for this touch of human frailty. She had made so many mistakes herself that she had felt a certain awe of Memling and his infallible pose. It was good to have him human like herself.

The bell rang again, three longs and two shorts. It was Slinky's signal. He came in aglow with importance.

Nellie demanded: "Where you been that you're so gay?"

"To a cemetery," he answered with a chuckle.

"A cemetery!"

"Two o' dem," he said, "and I've brung home de grandest batch of news ever. I've sold one of dem statutes."

"Which one?" said Memling eagerly.

"How do I know till you tell me?" he said. "It will need a little fixin' up, but you're a kind of a marble tailor, Mr. Memling. Didn't you toin a Revolutionary general into a statue of a female nymp'?"

"What's the idea?" said Nellie. "What you drivin' at?"

"Well, you see, it's like dis. I got a frien' who is a dago marble cutter out at Lilac Ridge Cemetery on de Harlem Railroad. I goes to him and tells him I got a bunch of statutes dat ain't woikin', and has he any use for any nearly ready-to-wear monniments? He falls for it like a pound of lead. He says dey was a jempman who loses his wife last week, and lays her away on Lilac Ridge. He's all cut up and says he wants a monniment for his dear departured. He's a rich banker, and he said he'd pay ten t'ousand bones for an angel. Me frien' de dago pulls out a coupla handfuls of his Eyetalian coils because he ain't got an angel or anyt'ing nearer one dan a coupla broken columns and a Gates Ajar.

"He tells Mr. Widderer, oh, yes, he

knows where to lay hands on de swellest kind of angels. But when he comes to inquire, every angel any of his friends had had, had flew de coop. A few days later he meets de widderer, and de widderer says, 'Ain't you got me a angel yet? If I had a nice angel I'd go as high as eight t'ousand bones for it.'

"Me dago friend t'rows a fit and says he'll get one sure. But nary a piece of dat heavenly poultry can he find. Dey ain't a angel on de market. Just before I strikes Lilac Ridge, he's talkin' to de banker, and de guy says: 'I must have a angel for me poor wife's monniment if it costs six t'ousand.'

"Me dago friend is use to widderers. Dey cool off so quickly you can't holt 'em. Every day dey lop off a little more of deir unconsolableness. Says he to me, 'Slinky, you gotta ketch a widderer on de wing or you lose him!' He's cryin' when he says it. Every day he's bein' bereaved of anudder t'ousand. Dem widderers is kind of auctioneers upside down.

"He says to me: 'Slinky, if you loves me, get me a angel before dat widderer marries again.'

"I says, 'I'll get you one by retoin mail.' He says, 'Remember every day means anudder t'ousand bones out of our pockets.' So I takes de foist train back to town, and here I am. All we gotta do is to ship him one of dem angels and split whatever de widderer's grief is woit' by de time we land on him."

He sank back exhausted with his oration and his gush of enthusiasm. Memling shook his head regretfully.

"It was a beautiful piece of work on your part, Herman, but unfortunately we haven't an angel in the shop."

"What!" cried Slinky. "Didn't I wrap up sumpum wit' wings on meself and help lug it to de van?"

"There was a winged figure, Herman, but it was a figure by Carpeaux entitled 'L'Allegro.' She has nothing on but wings and a very mischievous smile. She might suit the widower a few months later, but not now, Herman, not now."

Slinky tossed his hands in despair.

"Well, what's dat udder marble female under de white rag?"

"That is a demure and proper lady, Herman, clothed in a long white robe. But she represents Cleopatra about to apply the serpent to her breast. It was one of Cleopatra's few proper moments."

"Well, den, I lay down," groaned Slinky. "What's de use? A hundred tons of marble round de joint and all dat widderer goin' to waste."

The three sat glum and even more depressed by the nearness of good fortune than if it had kept aloof.

Suddenly Nellie rose, went to the two statues, and drew aside the sheets that covered them. She studied them closely, then turned to Memling.

"Say, Dirk, do wings ever come off?"

"Many saints have molted or lost theirs entire," said Memling. "In this sinful world wings, like halos, are excessively deciduous."

"I mean statue's wings?" said Nellie.

"Yes, the wings are often carved from a separate block of marble and mortised on the torso. But why do you ask?"

"I was thinking that if this pair of wings was plucked off this goil in the altogether and pinned onto the shoulder blades of that Cleopatra dame—maybe, you'd have a kind of an angel that might pass in a crowd."

Slinky leaped to his feet.

Memling rose with more leisure. He walked round the statues making measurements with his eye.

"Unfortunately Cleopatra is looking up with an expression of wild despair. There is a marble teardrop on her cheek."

"Couldn't that be toned into a look of heavenly resignation?"

"Soitanly!" cried Slinky. "And de teardrop is for de handsome husban' she's leavin' behind. It would flatter dat widderer into puttin' on an extra five hunderd like as not."

Memling smiled at Slinky's fanatic zeal.

"Unfortunately again, Cleopatra has

a small and deadly serpent in her hand."

Slinky would not be rebuffed.

"Wit' a coupla swats wit' your chisel you could change dat soipent to a bunch of forget-me-nots, or a rosary, or sumpin."

"It might be done," said Memling.

"It's gotta be done," said Slinky. "And now dat I t'ink of it, after we pinch de plumes offen dat clothesless lady, I bet I can sell her to a frien' of mine who runs a Toikish bat'."

"You might bring me the stepladder, Herman," said Memling languidly. For once Slinky played the menial with enthusiasm. He brought the ladder, and Membling climbed it to make a careful inspection of Mademoiselle L'Allegro's shoulder blades. She did not blush. She did not look as if she had ever blushed.

"The lady's wings are false," said Membling. "She would look quite as well without them. It is not impossible to detach them and award them to the Cleopatra. She needs them. But it's a matter of some delicacy."

"It is a matter of some delicacy to get dat banker before his inconsolables runs out complete," said Slinky. "And now, if you'll excuse me, I'll telephone me dago friend to have his widderer here day after to-morrow."

"I should like a little longer," protested Memling.

"We can't afford it. Dat widderer is simply oozin' away at de rate of a t'ousand plunks every twenty-four hours."

IV.

Two days later the transfer of wings had been effected and the marble dust from Cleopatra's shoulder blades swept from the floor. The "serpent of old Nile" looked almost astonished with her deadly aspic changed to prayer beads, her suicidal grief for Antony changed to a serene aspiration for a Christian heaven she had never heard of, and her amorous shoulder blades clothed on with pinions.

The frivolous L'Allegro seemed to miss her wings no more than the rest of her costume, especially as she had been sold into slavery for five hundred dollars. She was making herself at home in the ladies' wing of a luxurious bath establishment, and then she smiled mockingly at the portly members of her own sex who enviously aspired and perspired toward her own proportions. Roger Van Veen is not likely to see his stolen L'Allegro, for he is not likely to be admitted, or to ask to be admitted, to that section of that establishment.

The bereaved banker came, saw, and was conquered by the apotheosized Cleopatra, and, as Slinky had predicted, the marble tear shed for Marc Antony had turned him into an easier mark.

He consented to pay four thousand dollars for her, but he was a banker, even in his weeds, and he insisted on paying only one thousand in cash, the rest in notes of various duration.

Memling regarded the notes with dread, for every day's delay in America imperiled his liberty. A bright idea flashed over him, however, and he asked the banker if he would honor his own notes by cashing them—at the usual discount.

And this the widower did—at a little better than the usual discount. Once a banker always a banker.

The Italian marble cutter had been browbeaten into accepting five hundred dollars for his share, and paying all the expenses of transporting the ex-Cleopatriated statue and setting her up on Lilac Ridge. He wept and cursed copiously, but finally yielded, and secretly congratulated himself. He would be at no further expense than the cartage and erection of the statue. You can see her now, very much at home, if you visit Lilac Ridge. The widower has since remarried, but Cleopatra still revels in her new costume. Van Veen has never been there to see.

Once the deed was consummated, the bereaved banker gone, and the marble cutter on his way back to Westchester, the three conspirators put the heap of money at the feet of the pseudo angel and danced in a wild circle round her.

The telephone bell cut the revel

short. Memling said to Slinky: "You answer it, Herman, and say you're my secretary—no, with that dialect, you'd better be my butler."

Slinky slumped from his height of pride, but obeyed, while Nellie and Memling listened.

"Hellow, hellow, well, what t'—hellow! Who iss it? Mr. Who? Mr. Van Bean—no, Veen—oh, yes. Well, Mr. Van Veen, whatcher want? Oh! Well, me master is upstairs in de—er—aquarium. What? Come closter to de phone. I'm de butlêr, you kin speak plain to me." A long silence from Slinky. "Oh, all right. If you'll hold de wire, I'll run up and tellum."

He set the receiver down and tiptoed to the corner where Memling and Nellie beckoned him.

"He says you promised to call him up, but you ain't done it. He got your address at de club and got your phone number from Inflammation, and he was expectin' to go to Europe, but, bein' kep' back by business, he wants to see dem pitchers before he takes de next boat."

Memling hesitated. He was mortally afraid of Van Veen, but success intoxicated him to dare anything.

"Well, I might as well brazen it out," he said, and with grim resolution went to the telephone.

"Oh, how are you, Mr. Van Veen! Oh, yes, I remember it perfectly. Very stupid of me. I've been exceedingly occupied. Not at all—yes, indeed. The pictures are at the home of Mrs. ——, the widow I spoke of. Of course, you could see them. Well, her home is—er—perhaps you'd better come here. I'll have them at my studio—this afternoon? Very good!"

He glanced round and saw the hybrid angel still unremoved. It would never do to have Van Veen find her there. He turned back to the phone.

"Oh, I forgot! My man reminds me that I have an engagement this afternoon. To-morrow, if you will. Good, to-morrow, then. Thank you. Yes, isn't it warm? Quite like summer. Oh, not at all. Good-by, Mr. Van Veen."

He rosé from the telephone, and said to Slinky:

"You telephone your Italian friend that he must get this angel out of here before to-morrow noon, if he has to take her in a shawl strap. Nellie, you come here."

While Slinky pursued the marble cutter through the telephone, Memling took his old model to a far corner, and said:

"Nellie, you've got to be a widow."

"Whose?"

"It doesn't matter much."

"I'd like to be your widow."

"Thanks!"

"I don't mean that, of course. I mean I'd like to have a chance to be your widow and then have you change your mind and not die."

"That's very nice of you, Nellie. I'm afraid I'd make a pretty poor sort of husband."

Nellie sighed to the depths of her poor little warped soul. So many things that other people had, she could not hope to have. She blamed fate more than herself, and fate was the more at fault. It had started her wrong, and environed her wrong.

Memling looked at her sadly. She, with her crooked parentage and her mismanaged youth, had gone through nearly all wickedness, yet kept the kernel of her soul full of decent hopes and noble longings, in spite of all the evils she had suffered, the buffets she had had in the face.

He, with every advantage of birth, gentle breeding, lofty ideals, and high beginnings, had permitted one blow of man's injustice to twist him aside from his ambitions and corrupt everything in him to a craven cynicism. She was a good seed fallen on a rock and trampled and parched, forbidden to grow at all. He was a tree that had shot up straight, then bent under one storm till he pointed back to earth and grew gnarled, fruitless, hopeless.

He shook his head sadly and dismissed regret and remorse. They could always wait. He took up the more pressing business. "As I said, Nellie, you are to be a widow."

"All right," she answered, with a brave recovery. "What's my name?"

"You can have your pick. It's a privilege few women have had. Give me the telephone book." She handed him the bulky tome, and it fell open midway.

"How would you like to be Mrs. O'Dowd or O'Grady?"

"Come out of Ireland," she said.

"Well, here's Mrs. Obermeier or Mrs. Ottenheimer."

"And don't jump to Jerusalem."

"Mrs. Palmieri or—here's a good one: Papavasilopulo."

"Whew! Gimme sumpum I can look and talk like—sumpum United Statesy."

"How's Patterson?"

"Sounds like New Joisey. It ain't very swell. Gimme something kind of 'ristocratic."

"Mrs.—Van Benthuysen."

"That's grand!"

"I don't believe you could live up to it, Nellie. Besides, Van Veen is a Van himself. These Vans are very jealous of each other."

"Me father used to drive one once."

"One what?"

"Van."

"Take shame to you, Nellie! How would you like to be Mrs. Vaughan?"

"That's not so worse."

"Or Mrs. Vernon?"

"That's simply supoib. Me for Mrs. Voinon."

"I'm afraid of your oi's, Nellie. We'll stick to Vaughan, Mrs. *Nellie* Vaughan."

"Nix on the Nellie. Consuelo Arabella for mine."

"All right! Consuelo Vaughan you are. Have you a black dress?"

"On'y that black sequin I wore last night to the theatre."

"That's less like mourning than a red satin would look."

"Then I gotta get sumpum else. Have you got the price?"

"I have. Go out to-morrow morning and buy a full set of weeds that will look like real mourning."

"How much? Halfway in and halfway out?"

"Yes. Get something becoming. And now for a lesson in high art—say Terborg."

"Toiboig."

"Not a bit like it. Try again—Terborg."

"Turrburrg.

"The 'r' should not sound like the slipping of a cog, neither should it be perverted into 'oi-oi.' Once more, and remember, you're supposed to be a lady of the upper, not the lower, East Side."

"Say, what kind of a guy was this I'm mournin' the loss of, anyway?"

"We'd better make sure of that now. And put it in writing, so that we'll agree."

They set to work to devise a past for the late Mr. Vaughan. Memling wanted to call him Percy—but since Nellie made it Poissy—he changed it to the safer and saner John. Even Nellie could not twist that.

Since Nellie knew little of the upper circles except what she had learned in studios, Memling made Mr. Vaughan an amateur artist of independent income, which he had lost in the late panic. In his travels in Holland he had picked up a number of masterpieces. Since Nellie knew nothing of Holland, it was thought best to date this visit prior to her marriage.

Nellie's last question was a sudden:

"Say, who is goin' to be me chaperon?"

Memling thought of Nellie's readiness to go anywhere at any time. He smiled. She explained:

"I've gotta be respectable, ain't I? I can't come to your studio all by my lonesome."

"You can be my cousin," said Memling.

This seemed to satisfy every contingency, but Memling waited the ordeal of the morrow with all of a dramatist's first-night terror over the prosperity of a new play before a strange audience.

V.

The next morning Cleopatra, plus a pair of wings and minus one snake, went out of the studio feet first.

Early in the afternoon Memling received the second of Roger Van Veen's visiting cards. It was brought to him by Slinky, who was dressed like a butler, but said that he felt like something else. He did not mind the long tails of his coat, but he objected to his waistcoat. He disliked the omen of the stripes.

Nellie smothered her laughter at the sight of Slinky with a card on a tray, and made a dash for the back stairs. She was to slip out of the area gate, ring the front bell, and make a formal reappearance.

Memling's last word was, "Remember your pronunciations."

"I will," she whispered. "The guy's name is not Toiboig, but—Toiboig."

Memling threw up his hands in despair. He was sure that Nellie's dialect would ruin everything and probably land them all in the penitentiary. He had grown too much used to Nellie, to realize that she had something besides illiteracy. She had the beauty of Aphrodite and the woman's wit of Lilith, though they meant nothing to her any more except in the service of her idolized Memling.

When Roger Van Veen was ushered in, he brought with him Herbert Haslam! Memling was completely upset. He had never expected a double cross-fire. Between a shrewd millionaire and a cynical critic, he was taken in enfilade indeed.

And somehow Memling, who had put aside nearly every other sense of shame, felt a horror of making use of a fellow clubman. It was bad enough that the transaction should have started in the sacred realm of his beloved Mummer; to dupe two members at once, was getting desperately ungentlemanly. And Memling clung to the ideas of a gentlemanly behavior as a last shred of self-respect. But he was in for it, and there was no turning back.

Van Veen was more dapper than ever, his lips more like the edges of a watchcase, for he was about to buy something. His first words were—and he spoke with the authority of a purchaser:

"I'd like to make it plain at once, Mr. Memling, that I look at these pictures purely as a business transaction. The fact that they are for sale by a widow does not affect me in the least. My charities are taken care of by a special secretary. I hope you will not emphasize the fact that the pictures are the last property of a widow in distress."

Memling hated him for the speech, but he managed to say:

"I shall not allude to it, Mr. Van Veen, further than to remind you that since she is a widow and in need of immediate money, the opportunity is double for a shrewd business man like you to pick up great bargains at your own figures."

The thrust told. Van Veen glanced at the sculptor's gentle face and saw no irony there. He took flattery from the insult, and his little eyes snapped. Memling hated him more than ever, and it struck him as almost a noble task to fool this old miser, and a masterpiece of sportsmanship to sell him his own properties—make him a receiver of goods stolen from himself.

He led the way to the paintings, set up on easels or along a divan. And Van Veen scrutinized them closely with a pretense of knowledge that did not deceive a connoisseur.

He hissed: "Very nice. This one is very, very nice. And this one is very nice, too."

But Haslam went into unfettered raptures that his profession rarely permitted or justified.

"They're great! They're great! The texture of them—these Dutchmen got the texture of everything, silks, furs, leather, human hide, a 'cello, a chair—the texture of the sunlight itself—the texture of the very soul of everything. These canvases are small, but they're like little lenses; they focus a universe in a small space."

His hands were caressing them at a distance, and Memling's heart went out to him. He laid his hand on the critic's shoulder and said:

"I didn't know you had it in you to rise to masterpieces like these."

"I don't often get the chance," sighed Haslam. "The men who are painting to-day look pretty small, most of them, when you think of them through a perspective of a few hundred years."

Van Veen studied the critic closely, and tried to catch some of his enthusiasm. But while it was evident that he was ready to buy, his raptures were cold and cautious.

Still he was ready to buy, and Memling wished that he had kept Nellie out of it altogether. The bell rang and brought a cold sweat out on him. He was sure that she would make some ghastly slip with her "Toiboigs."

When Nellie came in, veiled, Van Veen drew himself up like an imitation of adamant. When she threw back her veil, the adamant turned to jelly—wine jelly.

Memling himself was startled at the face that looked out from the black crape. Fright had whitened Nellie's skin. Fear of danger enlarged her eyes, and fear of herself gave her a halty speech that went excellently well for the fresh grief of a meek little saint.

It was wonderful how neatly she said what she said. Memling was amazed at the ingenuity with which she evaded the use of the words she could not say. She talked about Terborg, and her husband's love of his work, and never once used the crucial name. Memling winced every time she approached, but she never touched the reef, not once.

She pointed out to Van Veen the beauties of the pictures, but he could only see the beauties of the hands she pointed with. When she bade him look at the canvas, he looked at her.

Memling, seeing that she paid no heed to the conquest, wanted to signal her in some way to take advantage of it. As if she had not seen her own success before he—or Van Veen—realized it!

But success inflamed even her, and she grew voluble. When little slips slipped in, Haslam, who could never lay off criticism, was alert for these, and Memling saw a little acid in his smile. He drew him aside to let Nellie have full sway with Van Veen.

Haslam went willingly. He said, when they were out of earshot:

"So this is your game, old boy?"

"My game?" echoed Memling, as his heart stopped.

"No wonder you don't have to chop statues out of the hard rock, when you can turn your handsome studio into a confidential auction room for selling old masters to old millionaires with alleged widowlets as auctioneers."

Memling turned red with rage. "If you dare talk like that, I'll kick you out of here, and your millionaire after you!" And he would have done it. He calmed himself enough to demand:

"Do you question the authenticity of those paintings?"

"Not at all," said Haslam uneasily, more convinced by Memling's wrath than by anything else. "But I am not convinced of your widow."

"Why not?"

"That dialect of hers. It's pretty thick when it slips in."

Memling paused. Then he shrugged his shoulders. "That's her own private affair, Haslam. Did you never hear of a pretty model marrying above her station?"

Haslam stared hard. "What a fool I am! Of course. I beg your pardon. Besides, it's none of my business. The one thing I'm here for is to make sure that the paintings are genuine."

"On my sacred honor as an artist, and a gentleman, I pledge you my belief that they are the work of Terborg and Van Mieris."

"I believe you. I'll tell Van Veen so."

"And when he has refurnished his empty walls at Ucayga, you can write your catalogue, after all."

This shot was a bull's-eye. It rang the bell of Haslam's hungry soul. He was Memling's agent from then on.

As they drifted back, they heard Van Veen saying to Nellie:

"You ought to have some one to protect you from the cruel world."

There was a senile greediness in the tone, and Memling wanted to throttle

the millionaire. Then Van Veen murmured:

"The pictures seem to be thoroughly satisfactory, Mr. Memling. Thank you for letting me see them. I will discuss the terms with Mrs. Vaughan herself to-morrow."

And now Memling wanted to boot him out. But he bowed him out instead, though he loathed him so that he could hardly speak.

VI.

The next day Memling waited in loneliness and impatience at the studio. Nellie had gone to see Van Veen. He had offered to come to her, but she had no place to receive him.

This time it was Memling that wanted her to have a chaperon. It was she that smiled.

"I guess I can take care of myself," she said and added tenderly: "I'm awful glad you wanted me not to go alone. It makes me feel you care a little for me, after all."

Memling sat waiting in jealous discomfort. He had never felt a tinge of green for Nellie before. But now he feared for her in the power of the spidery old plutocrat. He paced the floor, the prey of a dozen worries, each contradicting each.

At last Nellie came. She had a reticule bulging with money.

"He offered me a check. But I made him send out and cash it. How much do you suppose he gave me?"

"About half what you asked?" growled Memling. "And took advantage of your being a widow."

Nellie laughed: "As the French say, 'Oh, contrary!' I took advantage of him. He offered me twice as much as I asked. There's forty thousand-dollar bills in that bag."

"Good Lord!" said Memling.

"Do you want to see it?"

"No!" he snarled, knocking the wealth aside, "I want you to look me in the eyes."

She looked up at him with the simplicity of an angel.

"What else did he have to say?"

"A lot."

"What was it?"

"Oh, it wouldn't interest you."

"Wouldn't it?" roared Memling. "I insist on knowing what the old scoundrel dared to say."

His jealous frenzy rejoiced her. She laughed aloud.

"Well, he dared a good deal. He dared to ask me to marry him."

"Don't take me for a fool," snapped Memling.

Nellie winced and flushed. "He had a lot to say about bein' crazy about me. But I wouldn't talk anything but Toiboig. He never noticed how I said it. He can't say it right himself. But I—he tried to kiss me, and I slapped his face for him. It did him a lot of good—and me, too. He liked me better for it. Then he apologized and tried to get in my good graces, by doubling what I asked for the paintings. I was all to the *Lady Macbeth* till he sent out for the money. Then I said, 'Thanks very much. Good day!'

"But he put his hand on mine where it held the doorknob, and he played *Romeo* for fair. He said he was crazy about me, and he'd be honored and overjoyed if I'd be his wife. Honestogawd he did. I nearly dropped dead."

"What did you tell him?" said Memling hoarsely.

"I told him I'd think it over. I said it was awful sudden, and—all the things I could think of out of the books. And then I made a getaway. He was white as a sheet, and he'd been cryin'."

Memling knotted his brows in amazement and meditation. The astounding outcome of the game overawed him. Nellie had not only sold Van Veen his own pictures for a great price, but she had won an offer of marriage from the infatuated dotard.

Ugly thoughts of selfish yellow flashed into Memling's heart. When the pictures were restored to Ucayga, the watchman Beals might recognize them, or Haslam, in looking up their history, might trace their original sale to Van Veen. Exposure and pursuit, even to extradition, would hound them down.

But if Nellie married Van Veen nothing further mattered. The fear of ridicule would check everything, even if his love changed to horror.

The one wise, safe, crafty thing to do was to urge the marriage and hasten it. He put it to Nellie in another way.

"Nellie," he said, "it's a great chance for you. You've suffered all your life, and have known poverty, and shame, and hardship, and humiliation. You're in great danger now. If you should marry this man, you would be rich and safe—a great lady. Your beauty would win you a place in the highest circles. And your wealth would make you happy. Write to Van Veen and tell him yes. Marry him to-morrow."

Nellie heard him through and looked him through in silence. She had been thinking all he thought. She had followed his course of reasoning across his wrinkled brow. His words did not deceive her. The selfishness of his inner motive shone through the altruism of his words.

That he would sacrifice her to such a union for his own safety's sake cut her to the quick of her soul. Her only answer was tears, a flood of tears and wrenching sobs. All that Memling could get her to say was:

"You don't love me! You don't love me!"

And Memling understood—understood her and the heart of her heart. He despised himself for giving such ugly thoughts a moment's lodging in his soul. He realized that below even the depth of infamy he had reached was an uglier infamy—to sell the woman who loved him to a loveless marriage.

Suddenly realizing that, after all, he had not sunk to the deepest deep, and that there was yet some wickedness that he could spurn, he exulted like one redeemed from the pit. He caught the sobbing girl in his arms and murmured:

"I didn't mean it, Nellie. I wouldn't let you marry anybody but me. Dry your dear eyes and we'll go to Italy on the first steamer that sails."

She sat up and her tear-drenched cheeks rounded in a laugh of delight. And they began to plan their voyage to the new Old World.

But such plans of mice, and men, and maids gang aft aglee.

CRITIC AND PERFORMER

GEORGE H. HARRIES, who operates all the street-car lines owned by the Washington Street Railway and Electric Company, used to be a newspaper writer, and he put in most of his time roasting the service given the Washington public by the street-car companies.

One day an official of the company said to him:

"Harries, you write as if you thought you knew all about railroading."

"I know more about it than you fellows do, anyway," retorted Harries.

Just to try him out, the company gave him a job. He proceeded to take hold of the situation, pay off the company's debts, and give the public a good service.

THE SONGBIRD OF CONGRESS

GUSTAV KUSTERMANN, Representative in Congress from the ninth Wisconsin district, is the songbird and musical genius of the legislative body which he adorns. Kustermann plays the zither. In fact, he plays any old musical instrument at all, and he can sing any old tune, but the zither is his triumph. He had one made to order, and it cost him several hundred dollars. When it comes to weaving melodies, manufacturing tunes, and bringing forth the sweet concord of melting notes, the Honorable Gustav has the rest of the House sounding like a lot of uncultured crows. He plays the zither by day and by night, and he plays it by note and by ear.

No Man's Land

By Louis Joseph Vance

Author of "O'Rourke, Gentleman Adventurer," "The Brass Bowl," "The Fortune Hunter," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS.

In a quarrel over cards Douglas Blackstock shoots Van Tuyl and charges Garrett Coast with the crime. Coast is imprisoned, but is later released, to find that the girl he loves—Katherine Thaxter—has eloped with Blackstock. Coast buys a catboat, the *Echo*, and drifts around the New England coast. He meets Appleyard, an adventurer, who becomes attached to him. A fog settles over Vineyard Sound in the vicinity of No Man's Land, a small island south of Gay Head. Appleyard disappears, and Coast is alarmed by a dreadful cry. Coast goes ashore on No Man's Land and is led by a blind dog to the body of a murdered man. He comes to a farmhouse and discovers Katherine Thaxter. She tells him that Blackstock is with her and begs him to go. He starts for the shore in a storm, but hearing voices, conceals himself. Four men—one of whom is Blackstock—proceed to bury the dead man. Coast is discovered and chased by a Chinaman. Appleyard appears, fells the Chinaman, and jumps into the *Echo's* dory with Coast. Appleyard confesses that he is a Secret Service agent and that he suspects Blackstock is guilty of smuggling. He also states that while spying around, he found that Blackstock—who called himself Black—had quarreled with his telegraph operator, Power, and that a new operator, by name John Handyside, was on the way to replace him.

XII.

WITHIN another hour, and the morning was still young, the *Echo* rode at anchor in Quick's Hole, on the edge of the navigable channel, near the Nashawena shore, about midway of the passage between Vineyard Sound and Buzzard's Bay; and within ten minutes of the time her anchor splashed beneath her bows, Mr. Appleyard, his plans formulated and communicated to Mr. Coast, was noisily asleep in the cabin—enjoying a rest which Coast could not begrudge him.

For six hours the younger man stood a lonely watch, companioned only by the melancholy voice of the bell buoy off the southern entrance, a sound—the most forlorn and dreary known to man—which came fitfully to his ears in the occasional lulling of the wind. Other than this he had only his thoughts. No vessel came his way; now and then a lumber schooner, westward-bound, its dingy canvas spread full to the following wind, would slip quietly past the southern opening—far out in the Sound. But these were few, and they were all he saw; the promise of the weather was not such as to tempt abroad pleasure boats or other small craft.

What he could see of Buzzard's Bay through the northerly mouth of the Hole was a vacant waste of tumbled waters. The most detestable of winds, an easterly storm, known locally as an "easter," was brewing, and only those who had imperative business on the face of the waters cared to venture from their moorings.

All morning the breeze blew gustily, the scurrying squalls waxing in violence, whipping up a confused and lumpy sea. A little after two in the afternoon, following an especially vicious blast that lashed the waters of the Sound to a yeasty lather, there fell a protracted pause; as if the elements, having proven their power, were satisfied—content to rest against the hour when they should decide to settle down to the stern business of heavy blowing.

Something of this unrest in the air worked insidiously upon Coast and

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lent its color to his temper. By turns he sat deep in reverie, considering every aspect of the project proposed by Appleyard, and subscribed to by himself, hoping, doubting, seeking sedulously the imperceptible but damning flaw that might transpire to confound them, or rising, paced to and fro in the scant accommodation of the cockpit, fuming with discontent and impatience.

A thousand times, if once, his glance raked longingly the northward prospect, and in disappointment returned to rest upon the deserted shore of Pasque, across the water, or of Nashawena, more near at hand, but equally desolate, or to question now the lowering, windy skies, now the streaky tide that swept like a mill race through the straightened channel. His vigil seemed intolerably interminable; he doubted it would ever end. If only something would happen to put a period to this uncertainty!

As six bells sounded Appleyard came on deck, yawning and rubbing his eyes.

"Howdy?" he chirruped. "Nothing alarming turned up, eh?"

"Not a thing," said Coast.

"Good enough. Don't look for 'em till evening. When'd this lull set in?" Coast informed him. "That's all right; fit in with their plans; they'd rather make a landing in the dark, anyway."

"What difference would that make?"

"Not much; only the fewer boats touching No Man's Land, the less attention attracted. I s'pose you know there's a life-saving station on Gay Head? Sure; and part of their job is to keep a list of everything that passes by, from a rowboat to a coastwise liner."

"Of course; but—look here, Appleyard." Coast paused, doubt tinting his tone.

"Sir, to you?"

"There's one thing been troubling me. It seems to me we're taking a lot for granted. Of course, to begin with, I was only too keen to believe the worst of Blackstock, and so didn't entertain a doubt; but, seriously, what warrant have you for believing he's mixed up with this smuggling game?"

Appleyard rubbed his nose reflectively. "Wel-l," he drawled, grinning, "I haven't got any sure-'nough *good* excuse, I admit. I just know it's so. That's all."

"But——"

"It just stands to reason."

"But why," Coast persisted; "why does it stand to reason?"

"Now, say!" the little man protested with an injured air. "It's a pity I can't allow my intuition any rope at all! I just know it's that way, because it naturally has got to be that way. Otherwise where does our plot get off? Seems to me you might be a little liberal; if I were Sherlock Holmes, and wore book covers, instead of these foolish clothes of yours, you'd stand for the gaudiest flights of imagination—so long as I told you they were the outcome of the exercise of my deductive faculty. But just because I'm a common, ordinary ferret, and look the part, and don't put on any dog about it, you feel called upon to jump in with your logical objections and spoil everything. It's a dern shame, that's what it is!"

"But joking aside——"

"All right!" Appleyard snapped with a great show of indignation. "If you've *got* to know. What's Blackstock sticking in that hole for? Not because he likes it, you can bet; not solely because he's afraid of getting caught—for he settled on No Man's Land before Dundas come through with his confession; not because he wouldn't be safer in some corner of the world across the water——"

"I told you his wife said——"

"She said precisely what he told her. Naturally. Probably believes it. Rot! The real reason is the reason why he dropped his remittances to Dundas; because he's broke, and down, and desperate—ready to turn his hand to anything to earn a dishonest dollar. And this job's ideal for his purpose," Appleyard wound up triumphantly.

"But," Coast argued, "*she* has money."

"How do you know?"

"At least, her aunt had, and it was to go to her."

"But did it? I'll lay you a handsome wager either that she never got it, or it wasn't much, anyway, and Blackstock

managed to run through it, with the customary facility of scoundrels of his class. Don't talk to me. I tell you I know a lot of things for certain that I don't know for sure; and this is one of 'em. And now if you'll just kindly quit finding fault with my unimpeachable management of this affair, and duck below and pound your ear for a couple of hours, or until I call you, you'll be in much better shape for what's before you this night."

"I couldn't possibly sleep," Coast protested.

"All right; that's your lookout. But I'll thank you to clear out of this cockpit and leave me room to stretch in. Go and lie down and take a smoke, if you like."

"Very well," Coast agreed, smiling; for the little man had actually blustered and browbeaten him into a good humor and a confidence in the morrow. He took one final survey of the northern opening. "You don't think there's any chance they'll go round by Cuttyhunk?"

"It's one chance in a hundred; we can afford to risk it. They'd hardly be fools enough to risk the run round the Sow and Pigs lightship a night like this, while Cuttyhunk harbor's hard to get into from the bay at any time, and the channel out to the Sound practically impossible to navigate through with the tide against you—as it will be for several hours. Get along with you, now, and let me cool off and take thought against the unlikely, on my own account."

Notwithstanding his conviction that sleep was an impossibility, Coast, soothed by the swash of waves, and the softly modulated tolling of the distant buoy, presently dozed off; nor did he wake until Appleyard shook his shoulder several hours later.

He started up, half dazed, in some perturbation—with that singular flutter of the heart that men sometimes waken to face a crucial hour; he had slept upon his apprehensions.

"Well?" he asked.

"Time," returned Appleyard coolly. "They're just about to stand in round Lone Rock. Come on deck."

His small head and narrow shoulders were momentarily silhouetted against a violet-shaded square of sky that filled the companion opening; then he disappeared. Coast, realizing from the twilight within and without that the hour was late, followed with expedition.

"What's o'clock?" he asked as he stepped on deck.

"About seven. Take the wheel."

Appleyard dropped lightly into the engine pit, as Coast obediently moved to the stern and grasped the spokes. His first glance was comprehensive, summing up the situation in a single cast; he was now fully awake and very alert.

The *Echo* was adrift and, without way in a chop of darkened water touched with frothy foam, broadside to the flood current that was bearing her swiftly southward. Already the Sound was opening broad on her port beam, the bell buoy clanging sonorously not far from her bows. To starboard lay the channel, the bay beyond glimmering with a curious semi-phosphorescence in the windy dusk. The islands were dark and formless masses, their contours barely distinguishable. Somewhat beyond the northern mouth of the Hole a shape of white was moving beneath a triangular arrangement of lights—red and green at the base, white at the apex.

With a muffled cough the motor began to throb and drum. The *Echo* gathered way. Coast swung her gently to starboard, as Appleyard, throttling the speed to half, climbed out and covered the pit.

"Right," the little man approved. "Now hold her steady for Pasque, not too far up channel, and stand ready to put her about when I give the word."

"Aye, aye," said Coast intelligently. He pondered a while as the boat forged sturdily up against the seas. "Suppose," he said abruptly, "this isn't the right boat?"

Appleyard grunted unpleasantly. "It's got to be," he affirmed with conviction. "What else could it be? You'd make a shine gambler, if you want to know," he added, bustling about busily.

Coast subsided, although he contin-

ued to eye the oncoming boat with unmitigated mistrust.

Appleyard, having cast off all but one of the stops that secured the gaff to the boom, first lighted and set out the starboard lamp, which was, of course, invisible to the approaching boat, then lighted and placed the other beneath the seat.

"I got an eye-full of her with the glasses, as she came across the bay," he said, pausing beside Coast and balancing himself lightly against the motion of the boat. "She's a stepper, all right; a cabin cruiser, about thirty-foot over all, with a good, stiff engine in her—twenty-five horse power, I'd guess. She moves, when she moves!"

"That argues a crew of two?" Coast surmised.

"Just about—aside from our friend the passenger, Mr. Handyside, who's in such a sweat to get on his job that he has to risk the passage in the teeth of an easter," said the little man. "You can bet your boots no one else would run the chance—nor he, unless it was on urgent business. Now go about and stand across again, a bit farther up the channel," he advised, as the *Echo* drew under the shadow of Pasque. "So-o, that's it."

The other vessel was entering the mouth of the channel, at the moment that Coast put the helm over and brought the *Echo's* green starboard eye into view. A mile or so lay between them. Appleyard lifted the hatch and opened the throttle full, before setting out the port light.

A shower of spray swept over the *Echo's* counter, as she bucked the tide.

"That's the stuff," said the little man. "Now they're wondering what particular variety of darn fools we are. Hold her as she stands—steady."

Two throaty blasts from an automatic whistle floated down the wind.

"What'd I tell you?" chuckled Appleyard. "She's slowed down already," he announced, although Coast was unable to detect any difference in the speed of the nearing craft. "It hurts to do this." The little man jerked the whistle lever and educed a single, prolonged, derisive blast. "Lord! they must be cussin' a blue streak!"

By this time the *Echo* had worked well up into the channel, the other vessel being about midway through. To a second signal, a solitary blast, Appleyard replied with two, in utter defiance of every rule and regulation enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, for the prevention of collisions at sea. A husky shout of wrath answered this manifestation of landlubberly foolishness.

Appleyard responded with three short barks of the whistle, the same signifying what was obviously untrue—that he had reversed his engine and was running full speed astern; for at the same moment in obedience to his low-toned command—"Sta'board, sta'board your helm"—Coast again put the wheel over and the *Echo* swung smartly on her heel, showing her port light, and making as if to cut across the other's bows at a moment when they were but a few lengths apart.

There was an instant of suspense, as the boats drew swiftly together. Coast held his breath and prepared to jump, should the threatened happen; for it seemed unavoidable that the sharp stem of the motor cruiser would crash into the catboat's side. Even Appleyard lost some of his customary aplomb, and betrayed the strain upon his nerves.

"Sit tight—sit tight!" he whispered between his closed teeth. "Don't give an inch—they've got to—they don't dare—*ah-h!*"

The last was a sigh of relief as the cruiser swerved sharply in toward Pasque, shot forward a couple of lengths, and brought up suddenly with a churning screw—hard and fast aground.

A moment later the *Echo* rounded gracefully to port, within two yards of her stern; and simultaneously Appleyard, leaning far out over the combing, made an exceedingly cunning cast with a coil of line, which Coast had laid in against the possibility of a broken halyard. The flying loops settled accurately into the water, just above the foam

kicked up by the cruiser's propeller, and in another instant its motor stopped with a strangulated gasp.

Out of the cloud of profanity that smoked up from the three figures dimly to be discerned in the cruiser's cockpit, flew first one heavy spanner, then another. Both splashed heavily alongside the *Echo*. Not until they had drawn well out of range did Coast and Appleyard rise from the shelter of the combings.

"So far, splendid," commented Appleyard soberly, staring astern. "I reckon that, between the furrow they plowed in that shoal, and the several yards of good hempen rope gumming up the shaft and screw, they'll bide where they are a wee. Till the storm blows over, anyway. It ought to take a good diver or a marine railway to free that shaft. Now, if you'll give me the wheel, we'll go about and get ready for business. That was child's play, alongside of what's to come. Get the sail up, will you, please?"

Coast jumped to the halyards, keenly alive to the desirability of having the sail hoisted before the *Echo* lost the shelter of the lee of Pasque Island, and in two minutes of sharp work had accomplished the operation—materially aided by the fact that Appleyard had thoughtfully tied in four neat reefs while Coast had been napping. Clewing up the top-lift, and securing the peak halyard with an extra hitch, he returned to Appleyard's side, standing ready with the mainsheet. By this time the cruiser had diminished to a light blur against the shadowed shore astern—had, in fact, been all but forgotten by the two.

"Hardly seems worth while," Coast observed, with an eye aloft disparaging the miserly spread of canvas. Close-reefed as it was, the sail did seem ridiculously scant and ineffectual—a mere wisp of handkerchief spread on toothpicks—gleaming wan in the gathering dusk.

Appleyard replied with a self-complacent grunt. "It's a blame fortunate thing there's one man aboard this old hooker that knows something about the winds of these latitudes," he commented. "Wait, jes' wait! By the time we pick up Devil's Bridge buoy again you'll find we're carrying sail a-plenty. Believe me."

For a space thereafter Coast had his hands full; the *Echo* was swinging out of the channel, past the hollow, despondent, clanging bell, and the wind had found her with a swoop of fury and a wolfish howl. By the time he had trimmed the mainsheet to his satisfaction, and clewed it tight, the catboat was sweeping onward at a rate little short of incredible. The shore line of the Elizabeths faded out of recognition behind them.

Over the port counter the wind blew fresh and strong; to starboard the boom swung wide at the end of a taut sheet; beneath the stern the propeller was running smoothly at top speed; at the wheel there was a shrewd hand. With these to hearten her the little vessel snuggled her cheek deep into the water, like a swimmer confident of the mastery of his art—as Appleyard phrased it, lay down to her work and footed it like a dog with a bone between his teeth. Out of the deepening gloom long and sullen rollers, now and then shaking hoary crests, heaved up alongside and fell astern with a grim sound of gnashing—or else sped by the *Echo* with a brisk and forceful slap on the flank. At her heels the tender ran like a snapping terrier.

Coast considered the turn of affairs with grave satisfaction, touched by appreciation of the risk they were running. Just now all was well, but in time their course must be changed, and unless he were much in error, there would be a sea of sorts running south of Gay Head, an angry sea kicked in by the harried ocean.

"We ought to get this good and plenty—catch it full abeam, on the second leg," he doubted.

Appleyard assented with a chirp. "It's going to be some damp passage."

His companion nodded, went below, and returned armored in oilskins, a spare suit for the little man over his arm. "I'll take the wheel," he suggested. "Slip on your wraps, Old Sleuth."

"Copy cat," remarked the little man acidly, surrendering his place.

Coast smiled in the darkness. The wind was clean and cold upon his cheek, the wheel was fighting against his grasp. "I'll stand a lot of impertinence from you to-night," he said. He sighed contentedly. "This makes up for a good deal."

He buckled down with a will to his work, holding the *Echo* to her course with tireless arms.

Steadily the guiding 'longshore lights swung round them, marking their progress. To starboard Cuttyhunk, shining steadfast as a low-hung star, with the twin, red, staring eyes of the Vineyard Sound light vessel something farther off, now plainly to be distinguished, now blending into one; to port Gay Head lifting up its lofty, blinking beacon; astern, low down, a glimmer, frequently lost—Nobska. No nearer lights were there to bewilder; wise coastwise mariners hugged snug harbors on such a night as that; the *Echo* took her chance alone.

Touching Coast's arm, Appleyard drew his attention to a tiny glint of light in the south, where No Man's Land beckoned them from afar, across a weary waste of broken waters.

Coast nodded, with a set, grave face, knowing that his hour drew nigh.

XIII.

About midway between the eastern and western extremes of the north shore of No Man's Land, a little sandy spit juts out, forming, according to Appleyard, "what you might call a sort of a cove, if you don't care *what* you say." To the west of it lies the only good anchorage in the neighborhood of the island—one that can be termed such solely when the winds blow from the south.

Into the poor shelter of this courtesy harbor, under the pilotage of Appleyard, the *Echo* fought her way and brought up staggering, like a spent runner at the close of a long race, as her anchor bit into the bottom and her cable tautened.

While the little man lowered and furled the sail, and lashed the slatting boom to its crotch, Coast dropped into the tender with a bucket and a bailing pump—taking upon himself the harder task, for the dory had shipped much water on the trip across, to such an extent that toward the end it had been a serious drag upon the catboat, whose own self-bailing cockpit, from which the water ran off as soon as taken aboard, had hardly served to offset the handicap.

It was a good ten minutes before he succeeded in ridding the smaller boat of water. In the meantime Appleyard was quite as busy making all things shipshape and tight against the night.

When Coast returned he found the little man getting out the *Echo's* second anchor and spare cable, with which he purposed supplementing the heavier outfit at which she now rode; and there followed half an hour of hard work for both of them in the tender before the light anchor was in proper place, and the *Echo* fairly secure from the danger of dragging during the night.

It was difficult to manœuvre accurately in the darkness, which had grown intense, relieved only by the faint phosphorescence of the white-capped waves. The storm had strengthened perceptibly in the lengthening hours, and the cloud-wrack had become so black and deep that not the least ray of light might penetrate it from above, while not a sound could carry above the raving of the infuriated wind and waves. Only seamanship of a sort not inaptly to be called superb, eked out by Appleyard's intimate acquaintance with the waters thereabouts, could have brought the *Echo* safely through.

Coast took ashore with him a new sense of respect and admiration for his companion. It seemed incredible that so much fire and spirit could be contained in a body so frail.

What emotions, if any, Appleyard took ashore in company with Coast, remained inscrutable; for the blackness was such that they could not see one another's faces, and the voice of the tempest so loud and deep that speech

was out of the question. Perforce the two contained their thoughts as they drove the boat to shore through a quartering run of surf, making an uncomfortable, though not dangerous, landing on the west side of the sand spit; and still with no attempt at communication drew the dory far up and set off, side by side, wet and weary, for the Cold Lairs—as they had christened the abandoned fishing village.

It rose before them, vaguely stenciled against the dim skies, atop the first rise, a hundred yards inland. They stumbled up to and through its empty streets, a little wondering, a little apprehensive, more than a little alert, and inclined to seek the touch of each other's shoulders.

That either would be recognized—save Coast by Katherine—as the men who had been on the island that morning, was little likely; so far as they knew neither had been seen but by the Chinaman whom Appleyard had stunned; and it seemed improbable that he could have caught clear sight or retained clear recollection of either.

There remained, however, a hundred masked dangers, growing out of Blackstock's certain distrust and misgivings; and a far-fetched possibility that the men they had stranded on the shoals off Pasque would find some means of escape before morning, and of communication with Blackstock by means of wireless from the mainland. It was no more than an improbable possibility, but none the less it held its meed of danger, and they might not forget it, though Appleyard had argued and contrived plausibly against mischance.

If the crew of the grounded vessel, he explained, chose to land on Pasque, they would better their condition not at all—merely exchange a comfortable cabin for the questionable freedom of a little, two-by-four island cut off from Naushon and its habitations by the deep, swift currents that scoured Robinson's Hole. In another direction it would profit them as little to seek the cheerless shelter of the life-saving station on Nashawena; it would require more than man power to free the cruiser from the sticky clutches of the shoal; and their chances of obtaining a tow before the storm abated were positively *nil*.

"You can tie to this," Appleyard had summed up. "They'll stay put till morning. And then a while. That'll give me time to 'tend to their cases proper-like. Even should I fall down there, we've got, at the worst reckoning, a clear eighteen hours. And if that's not long enough for us to frame up a suitable last act for this thrilling drahmah of cr-r-rime and hooman hearts, we ain't fit even to dope out a scenario for a moving-picture film; and I for one will make up my mind to shake the legit and try to make a dent in the two-a-day."

From which pronouncement Coast drew what comfort he could.

As they left the howling desolation of the Cold Lairs and began another ascent to higher ground, the situation of the farmhouse became revealed to them by a single lighted window in its upper story. A rather considerable ways beyond this the wireless bungalow watched them with a second yellow eye. All else on the island was shrouded with invisibility, save only those patches of earth and grass disclosed within the radius of a two-foot disk of light, erratic and pale, cast by a small electric hand lamp which Appleyard carried.

Leaving the beach, they left also the flying spray which for hours had blinded them. The gale which buffeted the uplands of the island was still sweet with the fragrance of the sea, but with a difference, bearing not that alone but likewise the smells of earth and damp growing things, and of rain. A fine, thin drizzle had set in, scudding low in the wind, coating their salt-caked cheeks softly with an almost imperceptible film of moisture.

They bumped unexpectedly against the fence of palings round the dooryard of the farmhouse, felt their way to the gate and entered, moving warily round the building. Within was neither sound nor movement to be discerned, only the windows rattled with the gusty wind, and in the untenanted kitchen a second lamp burned dim.

Evidently the arrival of Mr. Handyside had been given up as improbable; the servants had gone to bed. One surmised that in that lighted room in the upper story lay the Chinaman whom Appleyard had stunned.

But it was not here that their interest centred. The rain-dimmed window of the wireless station drew them with an irresistible fascination. Appleyard led the way with the dwarf searchlight, trotting lightly along the wandering path, singularly suggestive of some new and curious kind of firefly.

The bungalow apparently occupied the brow of the island's highest ridge, something like a quarter of a mile to the south of the farmhouse, and near the southern beach. As they drew nearer, Appleyard slowed down to a cautious walk. At a fair distance from the lighted window both paused, as if seeking some final word; then, without speech—it would have been necessary to shriek to make oneself heard above the howling of the wind in that exposed spot—Coast caught the little man's hand and gave it a long, friendly pressure. Then he turned and moved a few paces toward the house. When he looked back Appleyard's figure had melted into the darkness.

He passed the window, turned a corner, moved past another window, and came to a door, before which he stopped.

Lifting his hand, he knocked loudly, and without waiting turned the knob and entered. A tearing blast of wind accompanied him, for the door faced the east. He had a brief struggle with it before he got it closed and turned to the light—his heart in his mouth, if the truth is to be told.

A hanging lamp of two burners, dependent from the middle rafter of the low ceiling, revealed the room in soft but strong illumination. Beneath it stood a round, green-topped table, strewn with a variety of homely things—books, pipes, ash trays, a woman's workbasket, a tray with decanter and glasses, and the like. A large rug hid the major part of the floor, the remainder of which shone with a rich, dull luster, as though well waxed. There were window seats with cushions and pillows and boxes of plants, a divan, several easy-chairs scattered about, bookcases set against walls paneled like the ceiling in dark green and natural wood, conspicuously an adjustable drawing table of the kind used by mechanical draftsmen.

To Coast's unspeakable relief he found Blackstock alone. Apparently the man had been sitting by the table, his feet on a near-by stool; but when Coast discovered him he was standing in that dogged, forceful pose of strength and preparedness which seemed somehow peculiarly his; with his feet well apart, his heavy body inclining forward from the hips, his broad shoulders a trifle lifted, his round and heavy head thrust forward on its thick, strong neck. He wore gray flannels, loose and negligent, with a silk shirt open at the throat.

His large and noticeably protruding eyes were turned toward the door, so naturally that at first Coast thought the man must be able to see him; a second glance, however, found in their aspect a strained fixity, amounting nearly to a glare, which told eloquently of impaired vision, and corrected the erroneous primary impression.

Blackstock spoke abruptly, as Coast succeeded in forcing the door to—abruptly and harshly, with a certain jerky intonation that betrayed jangled nerves.

"Who's that?" he cried. "Who's there? What——" He paused to control his agitation.

"Mr. Black, I believe?" said Coast quietly.

"Black?" The man started at sound of an unfamiliar voice, and Coast saw that his whole frame quivered—slightly, indeed, but perceptibly. "That's my name," he continued hoarsely. "But—who are you? What d'you mean by coming in here without knocking?" he added with a show of bluster to cover his discomposure.

"I knocked—several times," Coast lied steadily. "The wind, doubtless. Sorry I startled you; thought you'd be expecting me."

"Expecting you!" Blackstock moved impatiently. "But, damn it, who *are* you? Can't you give yourself a name?"

"Why, Handyside, of course." Coast's tone was a perfection of polite surprise. "Surely," it seemed to say, "you must have been looking for me!" Aside from deliberately artificial inflections, he was at pains to speak crisply, as was not his habit; such being the only way he could imagine to disguise his voice. He was watching Blackstock closely, alert for a sign of recognition in the man's expression. Somewhat to his surprise he detected none. "I got orders to come here and relieve Power last night," he continued. "Came down this morning to New Bedford and——"

The words froze upon his lips. A door to his left had opened; Katherine stood there, watching, listening. Apparently she had started to enter without any suspicion that her husband was not talking to one of the servants, and in her astonishment had stopped. The figure of the man by the door could not but be strange to her, masked as its every line and contour was by the clumsy and fitless garb of yellow oilskins, supplemented by the deep shadow cast upon the face by the broad turned-down brim of a sou'wester. Yet Coast thought to discern a deathless apprehension in her pose, a mute but infinitely pitiful question in her eyes. And his heart stood still, for the crucial instant was imminent; in another minute, two at most, she would know him. And then——

"Well?" Blackstock roused him. "What you stopping for? Go on; I'm listening."

"I beg pardon." Coast tugged at the button on the chin strap of his sou'wester. "The lady there—I didn't know——"

Blackstock turned his head impatiently, moving his sightless eyes in the direction of Katherine. "Oh," he said, "my wife——"

The woman moved quickly into the room. "Yes," she said, still with her eyes to the stranger, "it is I, Douglas. I didn't know—I fancied one of the servants——"

"This is Mr. Handyside," Blackstock told her sharply, as if irritated by the interruption; "Mr. Handyside's come to take Power's place——"

Coast removed his sou'wester and came forward a pace, so that the light was strong upon his face. "Yes, ma'am," he said, "I'm the new operator. How d'you do?" He contrived to keep his tone coolly respectful and impersonal, but his eyes were pleading with her, and he hung upon the issue of her response as a condemned man lives in the hope of a reprieve.

She knew him now; his action in discovering his features had but hastened slightly the confirmation of her most dread premonition. And of a sudden her face was a mask of chalk, set with eyes that blazed with the cold fires of terror. Coast saw her sway, but dared not move to her assistance, though he feared she was about to faint. Indeed there was no need; she was fashioned of sterner stuff; though every atom of her being shuddered, she remained mistress of herself. Her answer came pat as he ceased to speak.

"Good evening," she said; and so admirable was her self-command that there was even a hint of languid indifference in her voice. "You have surprised us, indeed, Mr. Handyside."

"Indeed, yes!" Blackstock broke in. "It's hard to believe. D'you mean to tell me you made the run through this storm?"

The blood was flowing back into Coast's heart. He flashed the woman a look of thanks, but her gaze was blank as it met his, and he knew that as yet she existed and guided her actions automatically. The real awakening to the situation was yet to come—nor in her case could it be long delayed. The crisis was not yet over.

"Well," he said with a careless half-laugh, "I'm here, you see. It is a blow, that's a fact. Had me frightened; I've seen some storms—but they were from the decks of ocean liners." He began to unfasten the oilskin coat. "Lucky to get here at all, I guess."

"That's a fact, or I'm no judge of weather. I wonder you managed to

get Finn and Hecksher to take the chance."

"They didn't want to." Coast offered up a fervent prayer of gratitude for the fortuitous turn of the conversation that had supplied him with the names of Mr. Handyside's traveling companions. "But I was told to hustle because Power was leaving you practically without notice, so I insisted. Of course the fog held me up this morning; and then we had to have an accident."

"How's that?" Blackstock sat down heavily, still with his staring eyes turned toward Coast, his face clouded with thoughtfulness. "Where are they, anyway?" he continued without pause, as one reminded of an oversight. "Finn —Hecksher—why aren't they with you?"

"Oh, they're all right," Coast parried, making time for Katherine, whose struggle to retain her poise and comprehend just what it all meant was engaging his attention to such a degree that he had to force himself to give heed to Blackstock. "You don't need to worry about them."

Blackstock leaned forward, scowling intently. "What d'you mean by that? Didn't they bring you here?"

"Only part way. You see, this accident I mentioned——"

"What sort of an accident? Where'd you leave them?"

"Safe enough—high and dry—aground in Quick's Hole."

"The devil you say! How'd Finn come to run the *Corsair* aground? Why, he knows more about this coast——"

"Not his fault. It came about through the kindness of some amateur asses—beg pardon, Mrs. Black; I'm quoting Mr. Finn—in a catboat. They almost ran us down midway through the Hole—didn't seem to know what they were doing; and in trying to avoid a collision we piled up on a shoal on the left-hand side of the channel—I forget the name of the island it makes off from."

Coast hesitated in assumed perplexity, in actual trepidation more acute than he cared to acknowledge even to himself.

"Pasque, you mean?"

"That's it." But though his story seemed to pass current, Coast experienced no access of ease. The tension was unrelaxed. Katherine was recovering from her shock and—what would she do when she had had time to take a second thought? Would her primal impulse to shield him, to further deception, prevail? Or would she yield to some mad impulse of loyalty to her husband and expose him and bring ruin down upon them both?

He could not keep his eyes from her. Not a detail of her attitude, not a convulsive movement of her hand, in whose rosy hollow lay his life and hers, escaped him. She stood, unmoving, by the table, one hand flattened upon it for support. The other tore continually, but without sound, at the silken ruffles round the neck of her house gown. There was a twitching in the muscles of her mouth, but the line between her lips was set and hard. He noticed a slight dilation of her nostrils, together with the quickened rise and fall of her bosom. But her deathly pallor most distracted him—that and the cold, metallic gleam in her eyes.

Meanwhile he heard himself talking, responding glibly to Blackstock's testy questions.

"But how the devil'd you get here, then?"

"Pure luck. We'd been stuck about half an hour when a fisherman—fellow name of Wise, from Vineyard Haven—came through, trying to beat the storm home. We hailed him and he luffed up to us—he could do that with his boat, a light-drafted Cape Cod cat; and when we found he couldn't help us off, I offered him a ten-spot to bring me on. You see, I understood it was an emergency case. He held back a bit, but the sight of the money fetched him; and he earned it. I wouldn't take that trip again for a hundred ten-spots."

"Well, then, but what's become of him?"

"Oh, he put me ashore, and went back to his boat—said he didn't dare leave her in that exposed anchorage, for fear she'd drag and come up on the beach. Besides, he said his wife'd be fretting

about him, and he wanted to be prepared to beat back, the first sign of a let up."

"I see." Blackstock nodded slowly. "You must be pretty well used up." He laid a hand, as if abstractedly, upon the table beside him, moved it to and fro, found the edge of the whisky tray, and grasped the neck of the decanter. "You've earned a drink. How about it, Handyside?"

The suggestion was made with an effect of the casual; but two things lent it another significance to Coast's understanding. Unremittingly vigilant, his glance, ranging between husband and wife, remarked first an unconscious movement of Blackstock's mouth; the lips opened slightly, and the man's tongue furtively moistened their corners; so does the heavy drinker frequently betray the strength of his weakness at the hint of a drink. And for the first time since she had entered the room Katherine's attention was diverted from Coast. Instinctively she turned to her husband; her face was curiously disturbed by a play of emotions almost too rapidly erased to be intelligible. Yet Coast believed he read them; there was a sort of panic in their number.

"Thank you," he said, "but I'm on the wagon."

Blackstock chuckled. "That's your affair," he said. "I'm not." There was a grain of combativeness in the latter words. He splashed whisky into a tumbler and diluted it with a little water, finding the objects with a singular deftness—on a par with that which had excited Appleyard's interest. "Health," he said tersely and drank.

The woman roused herself. "Perhaps Mr. Handyside will sit down," she suggested in a toneless voice.

Her gaze challenged Coast's. He looked away, unable to endure their piteous blaze of pride and defiance and scorn. The drama of her life had needed but this last heartrending touch. There are tragedies in women's lives beside which death itself is trifling.

"No, thanks; I'm all wet." He wondered to hear his own voice so steady, and in character with his impersonation. "About done up, too. If you don't mind showing me my quarters, I'd like to turn in."

"I'll show you the way." Blackstock rose. "You're to have Power's room."

Coast's glance was quick to the woman's face and found it inscrutable. Did she or did she not suspect?

"Power won't mind?" he asked quickly; and still she showed no sign.

"Power!" Blackstock laughed harshly. "No, he won't mind," he replied ironic. "Power's gone already. We had a little falling-out and he took one of my boats—the only rowboat—and left, without so much's by your leave; rowed across to the Vineyard, I guess. In the fog, too—the poor fool! Serve him right if he got carried out to sea and was never heard of again—the hound!"

And still Katherine's expression evinced no indication that she understood.

"You don't seem to like him much," Coast suggested uneasily.

"Not noticeably. Kate, get me my hat, will you?"

Without replying the woman turned and disappeared through the doorway by which she had entered.

Blackstock moved back to the table, and again found the glasses and decanter.

"No, I didn't like the dog," he said, measuring a drink with the same uncanny accuracy, his prominent and sightless eyes seeming to watch the liquor mount in the glass. "He was a surly devil, with a devil's temper. One of my servants—Chinese are the only kind we can keep in a place like this—tried to prevent him from taking the boat, and Power turned on him and nearly brained the poor fellow with a rock. We missed him and after a long search found him insensible down on the beach. He's been out of his head ever since—delirious. You may hear him during the night. Hope he won't keep you awake."

He set down an empty glass.

"It takes a deal to keep me awake when my mind's set on sleep," Coast

evaded. "I'm sorry about Power's misbehaving, though."

"Well, profit by his example and don't mix in matters that don't concern you—here, at any rate," said Blackstock insolently. "Katherine!"

"Coming." The woman reappeared. "I couldn't find your cane," she said, as she crossed to the man. A gleam of white, a slip of white paper, between the fingers of her left hand caught Coast's attention. He sought her eyes and found them meaningful.

With a word of grudging acknowledgment Blackstock took his hat and stick. "Come along, Handyside. We won't need a light; light hasn't any meaning to the blind. You knew my sight was gone, didn't you?"

"One would hardly suspect it." Coast took up his sou'wester and followed the man to the door. The rustle of the woman's gown told him that she was near behind them.

"Oh, I find my way about; I know this cheesebox of an island like the palm of my hand. It's no worse than navigating your own room in the dark."

"Allow me." Coast turned the knob and opened the door; Blackstock bent his head to the roaring wind and shouldered out against its force.

A hand touched Coast's; the slip of paper passed into his palm. For a single instant he looked into the eyes of the woman he loved—looked and read their message of pleading and despair. Then with a sadly negative shake of his head he followed her husband out into the wind-whipped darkness, pulling the door to behind him.

The blackness by contrast was doubly Stygian. He could not see the hands that pulled at the brim of his sou'wester, jamming it tight down over his ears. But when he cast about for Blackstock he saw his figure outlined against the glow of a window.

Their shoulders touched as they trudged off. The unavoidable contact turned Coast sick with hatred and loathing. Yet he held himself strongly in hand, crumpling fiercely that tiny slip of paper in his palm, and deriving from the feel of it a strange sense of confidence, as it were a guerdon of eventual victory.

She had not denounced him. He would save her yet. In spite of herself, he would save her.

XIV.

"Look here, Handyside. Voorhis give you any message for me?"

Blackstock stood with his back to the stove in the farmhouse kitchen; with his hands in his pockets, his heavy shoulders lifted, he bent slightly forward, swaying all but imperceptibly on the balls of his feet. So standing, in the dull saffron illumination of the common kerosene lamps, he loomed hugely in the room, overshadowing and dwarfing the two mute, placid Chinese who pattered about, preparing a meal for Coast—having been routed out of bed for that purpose.

Coast tilted back in a kitchen chair on the far side of the table from Blackstock. He considered quickly and lied deliberately and whole-heartedly, with full knowledge of the consequences of a misstep.

"There wasn't time," he said. "I was off duty and they rounded me up with just time to catch the midnight train."

"And Voorhis sent no word?" Blackstock demanded incredulously.

"He said you'd be advised by wireless that I was on the way."

"No more than that?"

"Only that I'd find it a job after my own heart down here; that I was to do as I was told, and mind my own business, and see nothing except what you shoved under my nose; that it would be worth my while; and that he knew he could depend on me. I guess he did, too. I guess he knows what kind of a man you need down here, Mr. Black, and Mr. Voorhis isn't the sort to pick a man out of a grab bag for a special purpose. Isn't that so?"

"If I know Voorhis, it is." Blackstock rocked back and forth on his feet, pursing his full, loose-lipped mouth. "I can tell more about you in the morning," he said; "we'll have a talk and come to an understanding."

"Why not now?"

"Morning will do," said Blackstock decidedly.

Coast refrained from pressing the matter. It was enough for the time that his story had apparently been accepted; at least, it had passed unchallenged. The strain was relaxing a little—particularly since now he had but one auditor to lie to. It began to seem well-nigh feasible, this wild scheme he had concocted in concert with Appleyard, and had put into execution in fear and trembling. He did not delude himself with any fatuous reliance upon the stability of his picturesque castle of lies; that it was liable to come thundering down about his ears at any moment he was well aware; but he was content that for the present it owned a semblance of endurance.

For some minutes Blackstock had not spoken. Coast glanced up at him, and, as if he were aware of that fact, the man shook himself out of what had seemed to be profound abstraction.

"How about Mr. Handyside's supper, John?" he asked.

"Ready very soon," replied one of the Chinese meekly.

"Hurry it up, then; he's tired. Guess I'll step upstairs and have a look at Chang," said Blackstock. "That's the fellow Power knocked out, you know," he added superfluously, as he left the room, moving lightly, with quick steps, noiseless in his rubber-soled boat shoes.

Far from resenting being left alone, Coast fell to and ate with an added relish the food which one of the Chinamen presently set before him. Although up to that time excitement had made him forgetful of the fact, he had tasted nothing since midday, and now found himself excessively hungry. The meal was plain, but well cooked, and a great relief from the somewhat monotonous diet of bacon and eggs to which he had been restricted since the previous morning. He took his time over it, indeed, and toward the conclusion began to wonder what Blackstock found to keep him so long above-stairs.

The dishes were removed and the Chinamen set about washing up, chattering to one another in low, expressionless tones. Coast lighted his pipe. Still Blackstock did not come down. His thoughts reverted to Katherine, and in natural course came round to the slip of paper reposing at the bottom of his pocket.

He looked cautiously round. The servants were intent upon their work, stolidly incurious as to himself, to all appearances; from the upper floor came a repetition of the high-pitched and querulous accents of the wounded man—a sound to which he had become accustomed since Blackstock had left him. He felt, consequently, fairly safe.

Withdrawing the scrap of paper, he stealthily smoothed it out across his knee. It bore a single sentence, scrawled hurriedly and lightly in pencil:

> Neither your life nor mine is safe if you persist in staying here.

Very thoughtfully he twisted the paper into a little spill, lighted it over the chimney of one of the lamps, applied the flame to the tobacco in his pipe, and then held it while it burned.

Precisely what was he to understand by that message? That Katherine had awakened to the truth regarding the part Blackstock had played in the killing of Van Tuyl—or merely that she mistrusted the temper of the man, should he by any chance suspect Coast's true identity? That she knew or suspected the truth about Power? Or that through some subtle process of feminine intuition she had divined that Blackstock had not been taken in by Coast's attempted impersonation of Handyside, and would, when his doubts were confirmed, seek to punish her as well as the impostor for keeping silence?

She had not had time to write more.

The spill had burned down until its tiny flame flickered blue and expired within a fraction of an inch of his finger tips. He pinched out the spark, and dropped the unconsumed fragment back into his pocket in a ridiculous extravagance of precaution. As he did so he became conscious of a shadow bulking large in a corner of his field of vision, and he looked up suddenly, startled to

discover Blackstock almost at his elbow. With such catlike lightness and silence the fellow moved!

Coast pushed back his chair from the table, as if to rise, but Blackstock dropped a hand compellingly upon his shoulder, and held it there.

"No," he said; "don't get up; you're tired. I'm off—just stopped to say good night. I hope you'll find your room comfortable—if Chang doesn't keep you awake with his jabbering."

"How is the patient?" Coast asked lightly, struggling with an impulse to shake off the man's grasp.

"Pretty bad—delirious half the time. Has his lucid intervals, and then goes off his head again. However, he'll probably be better after a night's rest."

"I say, Mr. Black," Coast could not refrain from asking, "how the dickens do you manage to move about with such sureness?" The inquiry was natural; his curiosity was piqued; the thing was not natural. He tried to bring himself back into character, concluding: "I don't mean to be impertinent, but I marvel at you."

A curious smile dawned on the face that lowered over him—a smile of the features only; not remarkable, perhaps, since the eyes were dead.

"Habit," said Blackstock; "habit and training, assisted by a strong feeling for directions. I guess I'm something like that fellow I read about in a book by the man who wrote 'Trilby'—d'you remember?—the fellow that could feel the north—'d turn to it blindfolded? Sort of a human compass. Well, that's me. Tell me where I am, and so long as I know the ground, I'll find my way. For instance, I'm going back to the bungalow now—alone. For that matter, I came practically alone; my wife tells me the night's as black as a stack of oats."

His hand remained on Coast's shoulder, obnoxious but imperative. "And then," he continued, after a slight pause, "my fingers remember anything they've ever felt. I run my hands over a man's face once, and I could pick him out of a dozen any time afterward. Like this."

Before Coast could object Blackstock had brought both hands into play upon his face; lightly, softly, and gently the ten blunt, hard tips of his stubby fingers moved over Coast's features, tapping, pressing, gliding on.

It was all but insufferable; Coast was conscious that the blood burned in his face like fire, that his heart was pounding—so loud, it seemed, that the other must be aware of it. Revolted, he almost choked at this familiarity of contact which he must needs endure, from the man whom of all men he had the greatest cause to hate, loathe, and despise. He dug his nails into his palms in the effort to enforce submission. Blackstock's face was within two feet of his own; a satiric smile, he fancied, rested upon those crudely modeled, animal features; he realized suddenly that it was the face of a satyr, simply, naïvely sensual, as soulless as its lightless eyes. And a vinous breath offended his nostrils: his own he held, clenching his teeth.

"Now I know you."

He could think of nothing to say but: "Oh!" It was with difficulty that he succeeded in enunciating that.

The hands moved on, down over his shoulders smoothly, and felt his arms.

"Hard!" commented Blackstock. "You've got strength, haven't you? Not as great as mine, though; you'd hardly realize how immensely strong I am. See now!" His hands moved swiftly back to Coast's throat and girdled it as with a collar of iron. "Do you realize I could with very slight exertion squeeze your breath out of your body?"

Coast's gaze explored the face above him. The smile was gone. Something ran cold along his spine, and of a sudden he was without emotion, quite calm and collected.

"But you won't, you know," he said easily; "that is, you wouldn't if you knew that my right hand in my pocket was pointing a pistol directly at your heart. Would you?"

Perhaps the fact that he had merely stated the truth was responsible for his coolness. He noted the instinctive

movement of the blind eyes, as if they sought to see if it was true; and he thought: "Habit is strong."

He lifted his left hand, grasped Blackstock's right by the wrist, and removed it with a certain firmness. The other released him an instant later, and the man stood back with a short laugh.

"But you wouldn't have fired?"

"Not any sooner than you'd have tried to strangle me."

"Of course I'd no such idea——"

"Of course not; but you shouldn't have suggested it. You made me nervous."

For a moment it was as if the mask had been dropped, as if they openly acknowledged one another as implacable enemies. And again Coast remarked that Blackstock quivered as he had when surprised, an hour before; a ripple of tensed muscles, hardly to be detected, seemed to shake him from head to foot—and was gone in a twinkling, while the hard smile reappeared on the satyr's features.

"Do you really tote a gun, Handyside?"

"Always," Coast rejoined briefly.

"Why—up here?"

"You never can tell what's going to happen."

"Perhaps you're right." Blackstock conceded the point graciously. "I don't mind, but you really oughtn't to take a joke so seriously. However, I'm full of sleep and you must be. John—hat, cane." One of the servants brought them instantly. "Good night, Handyside."

"Good night, Mr. Black."

Blackstock hesitated an instant, then got his bearings and found the back door with unerring accuracy. On the stoop he paused long enough to say: "We'll get together after breakfast and talk business." And the blackness received him.

Mystified, Coast waited, staring at the spot where he had last seen the man, until one of the Chinamen deferentially obtruded himself upon his notice, with a mild suggestion that his room was ready. He followed the fellow stupidly, preoccupied, his mind ranging far in futile speculation as to the riddle of Blackstock's conduct. Long after he had been left alone in the room that had been Power's he sat on the edge of the dingy bed, his gaze fixed upon the reflection of his lamp's flame in the windowpane, absorbed in the enigma.

He could not rid his mind of the impression that an inarticulate menace had lurked beneath Blackstock's apparently unsuspicious reception of him. He had not questioned Coast's account of himself, he had not seemed to resent the arrival on the island of the *soi-disant* Handyside; but still there had lurked something strange and threatening beneath his superficial bearing—something which, it might be, had broken out momentarily when his fingers had closed round the throat of his guest. The memory of that incident would not down; and when he thought of it he felt as if a trap had opened at his feet and quickly closed, affording him an instantaneous glimpse of depths in which a sea of flames seethed and writhed terribly.

Was insanity the explanation? Was the man in reality a homicidal maniac, at whose intelligence the lust to slay ate like a cancer? But in such case, he would not have delegated to another the assassination of Power.

Did he or did he not suspect? Did that momentary outbreak signify that he had merely allowed himself to appear to be hoodwinked and was but waiting to deliver some telling stroke in retaliation?

Did he believe Coast to be Handyside? Or had he by some unguessable means recognized him for himself? Or did he conceive him to be neither, but some person connected with those, unknown to him, who had been upon the island in the hours of the fog?

What had Coast to apprehend, what to guard against?

To this latter question his every instinct answered in chorus: Everything. He dared leave no stone unturned to safeguard himself—that he might continue to be prepared to protect Katherine.

It came to him that it was not unlikely he had been left in that lonely cottage with the three Chinese that they might quietly make away with him during the night, while he slept.

With this in mind he took a more detailed inventory of his surroundings; and found them hopelessly exposed. The room was a corner one, on the ground floor, in the front of the house. Its four windows lacked locks or catches, and were so low that an ordinarily active man might easily swing himself in from the ground outside. It had two doors, one opening upon the hall and the other to a room in the back; the latter was locked or bolted on the other side, the former was without a key. Its furnishing was limited to essentials—two common chairs, a washstand, a table beneath a mirror against the wall, a narrow iron bedstead in a corner, and a battered trunk, probably Power's.

Unquestionably he would have been safer in the open; but the storm was now at the top of its fury. Great sheets of water were sluicing the house as if cast from some gigantic bucket. The windows rattled continually in their warped frames; through the interstices drafts played round the room, causing the flame of the lamp to leap and flicker like a guttering candle. A great and unending howling rose and fell incessantly as the wind tore and raved round the corners of the building.

Danger within seemed preferable to misery without. More than that, if Blackstock had planned an attempt upon his life during the night, he might as well know it; for he was armed and unafraid, and he who knows what to fear is doubly armed.

Having wedged a chair beneath the knob of each door, he placed the lamp upon the table, turning it low that its scanty store of oil might last out the night, and sat down on the bed, the pillow at his back, Appleyard's pistol ready to his hands.

Insensibly as the dead hours lagged, marked by no disturbance foreign to the storm, his weariness bore heavily upon him. His thoughts blurred into a chaotic jumble of incoherencies. He nodded, drowsed with chin on breast, roused with a start as some unusually violent squall swooped over the island, drowsed again, and in the end slipped over upon his side and slept the sleep of the exhausted, profound and dreamless.

XV.

Coast awakened with a start, jumping to his feet as if to the peremptory summons of a subconscious alarm clock. Such, in fact, was more or less the case. He who sleeps upon the thought of danger is apt to waken with that thought predominant.

A moment gone everything had been densely dark, with that rich narcotic blankness which characterizes the slumbers of the overworked and overwrought. Now in a twinkling he found himself intensely conscious, in the middle of the floor, pistol in hand, every nerve on the qui vive, every muscle tense.

Gradually he comprehended that his nerves must have tricked him, that the hair trigger of his suspended faculties must have been pulled by some common but unexpected noise. The room was bright with garish daylight; the chairs were in place at the doors, as he had left them; there was not a sound to be heard in the house. Even the wind had fallen measurably, and with it had subsided much of the ceaseless overnight racket of rattling windows and complaining timbers.

He went to a window and looked out. Within his sight nothing moved. He saw only a range of rolling land, sparsely cultivated in spots, in others rich with the brilliant greens and grays and purples of early summer vegetation, all falling away in long swales to the restless sea. Fences and stone walls broke it up into irregular divisions.

He received an impression that it was very early, consulted his watch, and found the hour to be nearly six. So he had had over five hours of sorely needed sleep. He was properly grateful for that respite, although for the time being he ached in bone and

muscle from the strain of his uncomfortable position while asleep. His feet felt too large for his shoes, his clothing seemed to exercise an unwonted constraint upon his person, his eyes felt heavy and tired, and his mouth was as dry and hot as from a night's unwisdom. His body seemed to crave the healing grace of cold water.

Very stealthily he opened the hall door and looked out. From the silence within, there was no one else astir. He went out and back to the kitchen, finding it empty. After some momentary hesitation he returned to his room, found a towel, and took it with him out into the open.

There was still a fresh air stirring, brisk and moist, but by no means chilly. The earth was steaming slightly and the skies were veiled with a pale gray canopy of mist; mists, indeed, circumscribed the island like the walls of a tent, soft, seemingly tenuous, impenetrable to the eye. Now and again a portion of the island would disappear beneath a low-swung cloud of vapor.

Standing by the dooryard gate, Coast received a fairly comprehensive impression of the geography of the place. Aside from the farmhouse and buildings, and the bungalow with its skeleton aërial upon the ridge, with, on the other hand, the fringe of dilapidated buildings near the northern shore, it was practically featureless. There were no trees, only here and there clumps of low bushes—dwarf sumach, elderberry, and their ilk.

The ground seemed highest in the south—where, in point of fact, subsequent investigation showed that it fell away to the sea, a bluff of a hundred feet or more in height, it sloped northward in slow, gentle undulations, down to the beach beyond the deserted village. He observed moving spots and clumps of gray on the fields to the west of the farmhouse, and after a moment's puzzlement remembered that they were sheep, a legacy from the former agricultural population of the island. Otherwise there was no sign of life; the bungalow itself, with drawn blinds, seemed asleep.

He went quickly down through the Cold Lairs to the beach. The *Echo* was not to be seen, but this did not surprise him; it had been Appleyard's purpose to heave anchor and get away as soon as the gale showed signs of slackening. Inside the sheltering spit a sturdy little catboat was dancing crazily at its mooring, but it was evidently deserted, and Coast rightly guessed that the vessel belonged to Blackstock, that its tender was the boat which Power had been accused of stealing—principally, no doubt, to allay the suspicions of Katherine; some means of accounting for the man's disappearance had necessarily to be invented. That boat was, of course, nowhere to be seen; doubtless Blackstock had caused it to be carried up and secreted in one of the abandoned dwellings, or in some recess beneath the bluffs to the west and south.

It was in the shelter of the westerly bluff that Coast stripped and took to the water. Here, as all round the island, the beach shelved boldly, the surf breaking very near inshore. Once through that battering barrier he found deep water, where the heavy rollers swept in smoothly. Five minutes of fighting their terrific strength proved quite enough. He watched his chance, allowed himself to be carried inshore, found a footing, and regained the beach, narrowly escaping being beaten down by a furious breaker which vented its rage and disappointment in a thunderous roar and was sucked back by the undertow, gnashing its teeth with chagrin.

Scrubbing his flesh aglow, he dressed quickly, tingling with the exhilaration of his recent contest, every trace of fatigue and drowsiness washed clean away. A sense of life and well-being ran like quicksilver through his veins; he could have sung aloud or whistled but for the sobering thought, never far beneath the surface of his consciousness, of his responsibility. With Katherine to guard and care for, with Blackstock to watch and guard against and circumvent, there could be little room for cheerfulness in his humor. Yet

he was glad for one thing, that he felt refreshed and strengthened an hundredfold, and so the better able to cope with what problems and emergencies the day should bring forth.

Instead of returning the way he had come, an impulse moved him to scale the bluff, which at this point presented not too steep an acclivity. It proved something of a scramble, none the less, and he arrived at the top very nearly winded.

Pausing there for a time to regain his breath, he got a view of No Man's Land from a different angle, for he stood near its western extreme—the toe of the bootee. He found, however, very little new or interesting in the natural features of the place. A whorl of wood smoke rising from the chimney of the farmhouse announced that the servants were astir and breakfast in course of preparation, but the bungalow still showed a lifeless exterior.

With no demand upon him in his self-appointed rôle of espionage, then, and time to spare before the morning meal was ready, he thrust his hands in his pockets and strolled along the verge of the bluff with an idle curiosity as to what the Atlantic side of the island might show him in the way of shore and surf.

As he continued along the sole, approaching the heel of what has been likened to a crude sketch of a child's low shoe, Coast remarked the crumbling stone walls of what had apparently once been a rude summerhouse and observatory, set atop the highest hillock to seaward. But he had drawn quite near to it before he descried the edge of a skirt whipping round a corner of a half-fallen wall.

He quickened his steps and took her suddenly unawares as she stood, half sheltered from the breeze and wholly invisible from the body of the island, her back to the weather-beaten and lichened stones, her gaze leveled to seaward in somber reverie.

It was as if she had been expecting him; she seemed not at all surprised. But there was no light of welcome in her look, nor any trace of welcome in her greeting as he stopped before her, hat in hand and heart in his throat, with something in his bearing that called to mind a child convicted of transgression and pleading for suspension of judgment.

"I came out here, alone, to think," she said—"at least, to try to think." Her eyes accused him. "I fancied you were still asleep, and I hoped that even if you saw me you wouldn't follow. You might have been more generous, Garrett. I have so little time alone, so very little to call my own. You might have granted me this hour."

"I'm sorry," he said; but he made no move to go. "I didn't mean to intrude, and I didn't know you were here. If I had known it, however, I should have followed. It's hardly likely I'll have so good a chance to talk to you again."

"Yes," she admitted simply. There was a little catch in her voice and he fancied her lips quivered like the lips of a tired child as she looked away from him, seeking again the sight of the sea as if she drew from it some solace, some sorely needed strength against her trials. "We must talk, of course. But I did so want time to think. I have been trying all night to think, but everything seems so——"

She left the sentence uncompleted, raising her hands to press them against her temples and then dropping them with a gesture of utter weariness.

"Do you wish me to leave you, then?" he asked gently, infinitely moved. "I will, if——"

"No," she interrupted, in a high and nervous voice; "no! Now that you're here, now that we have the chance, let's have it over with!"

"I don't want to trouble you, Katherine; I'd do anything rather——"

"Then *why* did you come back? You promised; you went away; and I—I was sorry for you and prayed you might find happiness, Garrett. You promised, and you broke faith with me. I thought you generous at least, and—you came back—came back like a ghost to haunt me with memories and regrets." Her voice rose to a pitch

of wildness. "Last night I thought that surely you must be a ghost—that you had been executed, killed, and buried, and had come back to be his punishment—and mine, and mine!"

"His punishment—*his?*" he echoed. "Then, Katherine, then you do believe——"

"Ah, how do I know? What do I believe—what can I believe? I don't know. I can't think right; it's all so—so terrible."

Her tone fell to a low pitch of fatigue, dejection, and bewilderment. She leaned heavily against the wall, watching the sullen, interminable succession of the surges.

"You sowed doubt in my mind and fear in my heart when you bade me weigh what I once knew of the good in you against what I have learned of him. I tried, so hard, to do so justly and still believe you the guilty one. You swept the ground from under me with your arguments, your attitude, your explanations; and though they were your unsupported words—I never knew you to lie to me, Garrett, and I couldn't, can't believe you would bring me a lie to torture me, just for revenge. You made me think, and—at times I feared I should go mad, and then again I was afraid I wouldn't."

She turned suddenly to him and grasped his arms, lifting frantic, piteous eyes to his.

"Oh, Garrett, Garrett!" she pleaded, half hysterical, "tell me you lied, tell me it isn't true, tell me it was you!"

He shook his head sorrowfully, and she released him with a little dry sob and fell back against the wall, shaken and trembling.

"If," he said slowly—"if I thought it would make you happy, if I believed that good of any sort could come of it to you, Katherine, if I could even think it safe, I would lie—I'd lie with a clear conscience and tell you it was I who killed Van Tuyl. I've taken time to think it over and I've tried to think straight, to think the way that would be best for you; and—well, I came back."

She said nothing for a little time, but kept her eyes averted, while her hands tore nervously at her handkerchief. He stared dumbly with hungry eyes and a hungry heart at the picture she made, her fair beauty in relief against the gray and moss-green of the stones. The wind played in her beautiful hair, whipping a strand of it like pure gold across her forehead, and brushing color upon the pallor of her cheeks.

"But why," she repeated abruptly. "Why? What good can you do? Can you lift this weight from my heart, can you right the wrong to yourself, by being here? Can you bring Van Tuyl to life or make my—the man I married less than a murderer?"

"I came to protect you; you were alone and friendless."

"He would not harm me," she said, in an uncertain voice.

"Do you believe that? Do you expect me to believe it when I have seen the mark of his brutality upon your arm?"

"He didn't mean it, Garrett. He has his temper and—and sometimes he forgets and doesn't realize his strength—but he would never do worse. If it's true—and oh, I know it must be!—that he did—what you were accused of—it has been a lesson to him. I'm sure it has."

Garrett shook his head. "Then what made you write that message last night?" he asked.

"What do you mean? Oh, I don't know. I was afraid."

"And I was afraid," he said gravely, "and still am. That's why I couldn't stay away. The only man you could turn to in case of need was gone."

"Mr. Power?" She flashed him a startled look. "How did you know that? And how did you find out that another man was to take his place—his name, and everything? So that you dared come here in his stead!"

"I found it out before I left the island yesterday morning," he said slowly, wondering how much he dared tell her. It seemed needlessly cruel to shock her with the news of the murder on the island at that time; some hours must surely elapse before Appleyard could

return. And during that time things must continue as they were; nothing must be allowed to happen to rouse Blackstock's suspicions.

But if she knew that Power had been assassinated by her husband's orders—could existing conditions obtain? Would she be able to continue to bear herself toward the man as she had theretofore? It was conceivable that the lapse of time had robbed the killing of Van Tuyl of something of its horror, though Coast knew she could still shrink in loathing from him to whom she accredited the crime; but with this more recent and personal iniquity made known to her, could she endure and pretend she did not know, for however brief a time?

He decided to keep her in the dark as long as possible. To her "How?" he answered: "There were two of us ashore, you know—my companion as well as myself. It seems he stumbled upon the bungalow in the fog and accidentally overheard a part of Power's final quarrel with—with Blackstock. Then he learned"—Coast slurred the explanation, but she did not question it—"that a man named Handyside was to replace Power. So we thought it over and decided I was to be Handyside."

She was facing him squarely now, eyes wide with interest and alarm. "But—but how can you? What do you know about the work? The minute he asks you to send or take any sort of message——"

"I will cheerfully comply, if required," he assured her. "You see, I know enough about the system to make a stagger at operating. You forget my experience with the signal corps in the Spanish War—that taught me Morse; and it also interested me enough in such things to make me spend a good deal of time in the wireless room every time I crossed the water. I couldn't help picking up a working knowledge of the system under such circumstances. Don't worry; I'll make good when the call comes."

"But this Mr. Handyside—he may arrive at any time now; and then——"

"I doubt if he ever sees the island," Coast interrupted, smiling. "You see, the *Corsair* did run aground in Quick's Hole; we were the amateur asses that got in her way. And we left her there. Now, Appleyard—that's my companion—has gone back to see that Messrs. Finn and Hecksher and Handyside do nothing rash."

"He can prevent them?" A pucker of perplexity gathered between her brow. "How?"

"He'll manage somehow; he's very clever."

"But he must have some sort of plan," she countered quickly; "and you would know it. You're keeping something back. What is it? What does it mean?"

"I'll tell you in a moment," he temporized. "But first I'll ask some questions."

Still puzzled, she held his eyes intently. "I can't imagine what you mean. But go on."

"You told me that he, Blackstock, settled here to work on his inventions. Do you think he has accomplished much, that way, since you came to the island?"

She shook her head slowly. "Not a great deal. His eyes have hampered progress, of course."

"I thought as much. And do I understand that no one ever visits the island except your weekly boat from New Bedford?"

"No one. That is, sometimes, fishermen——"

"For what purpose?"

"I don't know; there was once quite a settlement of them down there, you know; and I understand they still use some of the building to store dried fish in. I'm afraid it never interested me much."

"You never watched them?"

"No. Generally they came to anchor after nightfall and are gone before daylight the next morning. Sometimes he has gone down to the beach to talk to them, but as a rule Mr. Power went with him."

"Their visits are fairly regular?"

"I think so. The schooner comes about once a month, I should say."

"And between whiles smaller boats call?"

"Now and then, yes."

"Do you recall when the schooner was here last?"

"About a month ago, I think. But, Garrett——"

"Just a minute, and then I'll explain what I'm driving at. Now, isn't it a fact that Blackstock and Power were busiest with the wireless, as a rule, for a few days before the schooner showed up?"

She nodded thoughtfully. "I never connected the two; but it was so. How did you know?"

"I merely guess. Now I'm going to guess again, in another direction. You didn't inherit much from your aunt, did you?"

"Why—a few keepsakes only. You see, she disapproved of my engagement to Mr. Blackstock, Garrett, and when I—was stubborn, she changed her will, just a little while before she died. She left everything in trust to me, but I was to receive nothing until the fifth anniversary of my marriage, and then only on condition that my husband and I were living happily together and had been doing so continuously since we were married—providing, of course, that he still lived."

"I thought—something of the sort. Your private fortune wasn't large, was it?"

"Not large—between sixty and seventy thousand dollars."

"And you let Blackstock take care of it for you?"

"Of course. He was my husband. I loved and trusted him—then." The last word fell with a bitter accent.

"And while abroad—he gambled pretty extensively?"

"I'm afraid so. After he had consulted specialists in Berlin we spent some time at Monte Carlo and later at Ostend and Trouville. Douglas—went frequently to the casinos with his friends. He spoke once or twice of winning large sums at roulette, but I——"

"But never of losing?"

She shook her head. "But what has all this to do——"

"Don't you see, Katherine? The man pretended to be well to do; in fact, he had nothing. He married you for your money and for what you were to inherit. Disappointed in the latter instance, he took the former and gambled it away. That is why you are here, why he is making this desperate attempt to recoup. Appleyard guessed it all, down to the last detail!"

Bewilderment dimmed her eyes. "But, Garrett, I'm afraid I don't understand. What do you mean by 'desperate attempt to recoup'? Who is this Mr. Appleyard, and why should he concern himself with my affairs?"

"I'll tell you." In few phrases Coast sketched succinctly Appleyard, his connection with the Secret Service Bureau, his theory as to the smuggling conspiracy and the rôle Blackstock played therein, together with the selection and employment of No Man's Land as a strategic base and distributing depot.

The woman attended with growing interest and excitement, for the time being forgetful even of the more vital crisis in her own affairs, nodding affirmation to a point well taken, frowning slightly over surmises which seemed to her far-fetched, but on the whole indorsing his conclusions.

"The whole thing's plain as a map," he wound up, in a glow of triumphant reasoning, himself momentarily unmindful of their greater and more intimate trouble. "Appleyard was right in every guess he made. The location of the island is ideal for the purpose, just far enough north of the main-traveled lane to be convenient; the steamer has only to swing a few points off her normal course to find herself in lonely waters, where she can make the transshipment without detection or noticeable loss of time. The wireless station is an invaluable adjunct to the scheme; it enables Blackstock to pick up the steamer on her approach and pass on the news to the schooner, so that it may effect a junction. It sets out, meets the steamer, takes off its consignment of

dutiable goods, returns to No Man's Land under cover of darkness the better to avoid observation by the lookout on Gay Head, and leaves before morning to continue her innocent fishing trip. Other boats, small boats, call by night and remove the goods piecemeal, landing them at this small harbor or that —just as Appleyard figured it out. And so we have them."

"You have them?" the woman repeated, perplexed.

"It's a practical certainty the schooner left New Bedford night before last; we saw her go, unless Appleyard is greatly mistaken. And hasn't there been an unusual amount of wireless signaling going on the past day or so?"

"That is so. The day of the fog either Douglas or Mr. Power was constantly in the operating room. I remember now that as the fog continued Douglas seemed to grow more and more irritable."

"Because the fog was preventing the two vessels from finding one another. Since then there has been the storm to blow the schooner offshore. Most probably she will try to make a landing to-night."

The woman said nothing, but moved a little away, as if suddenly sobered and brought back to realization of her position; again her eyes sought counsel and consolation of the sea.

"And since then—he has been busy?" Coast pursued, heedless.

"Yes—and more irritable. That night he had been drinking more than usual; I attributed his bad temper to that. Almost the entire evening he spent in conference with Mr. Power, in the wireless room, with the door closed. I presume it was stupid of me, but I attached no especial importance to it. Now and then their voices seemed excited, but it wasn't anything unusual for them to quarrel, especially when Douglas was—not altogether himself. I interrupted them once, but Douglas caught my arm and put me out of the room. It was then that he hurt me—as you saw. After that they quarreled more fiercely than ever—I think partly on account of the way Douglas had treated me. Mr. Power seemed to like me and—to resent Douglas' roughness toward me."

"It wasn't an uncommon occurrence, then?" The rage that smoldered in Coast's heart thickened his utterance.

She noticed the difference in his speech, and understood, and turned back to him quickly, offering her hand, her eyes beseeching. "Don't, Garrett," she said, a trifle brokenly; "don't think about that. It is over, now—now that I know. I couldn't bear ever to let him touch me again." She struggled a moment against the rising tide of her emotion, while he held her hand imprisoned in both his own. There was a despair in the face upturned to his that wrung his heart, so that he feared to trust himself to speak. "But, oh, Garrett, Garrett!" she cried forlornly. "What is to become of me? What am I to do?"

He drew her to him. "Why," he said tenderly, "that is why I am here, Katherine—to watch over and take care of you, to see that no harm comes to you. That is why I insisted on returning before Appleyard went further with his plans. I should have gone mad with the thought of you here, alone, defenseless, last night. If you will only trust me——"

His arm closed round her and for a moment she was very close to him, her head upon his bosom, her slender body racked and torn with sobs. He held her so, most compassionate and pitiful, striving as best he might to soothe her —the while joy sang in his soul.

"Only trust me," he murmured— "trust me a little, Katherine; and all shall yet be well. It is not the end, my dear, but just a beginning. Have faith a little."

"I do trust you, Garrett." Tears gemmed her eyes like stars. "I do and shall—but, oh, be kind to me, for if I have been foolish and headstrong and —mad, I am paying for it, paying heavily for it. It's all so dark and hopeless, Garrett. I see no light."

"Yet there is light," he said; and again confidently: "The light is there."

"I know—I know."

She drew away and dried her eyes. "I must go," she said, in a steady voice, "before he wakes. He was up late last night and I'm afraid drank a great deal. I left him sleeping heavily."

"I'll go back the way I came," said Coast. "The servants can't see you return to the bungalow from this direction, can they?"

"No."

"I'll make a detour. We must be careful for a little while. Can you bear up, do you think?"

"A little while?" She smiled forlornly.

"Until to-night. Appleyard will be back with the *Echo* by night."

"I will try, Garrett, and I don't think I'll fail. I've something left to cling to." She hesitated an instant, looking up to him with her wistful smile. "I think," she said slowly—"I think I see, far off but clear, Garrett, just a glimmer of the light."

She turned and was gone.

XVI.

Pursuing a roundabout course eastward, and thus practically completing a circuit of the island, Coast tramped back to a lonely breakfast in the farmhouse. He had anticipated, and not without a certain amount of dread, for the situation between them could not but be strained, making the morning meal in company with Blackstock and Katherine—principally because nothing had been said to lead him to expect anything otherwise. It was with relief, then, that he saw one of the coolies set out for the bungalow with a napkin-covered tray and a luncheon basket. The other servant—he never learned to distinguish one from the other; both answered to the name of John—waited on him in silence. Both, he noticed, confined their communications to monosyllables wherever possible; their demeanor with respect to him was neither surly nor overcivil—merely indifferent.

He weighed them inquisitively for a while, then gauged them as of a low caliber of intelligence, commonplace specimens of their type, deriving their initiative solely from the man called Chang, who remained invisible; and forthwith relegated them to a limbo of insignificance. That they would spy upon him, or knife him from behind with the same insouciance, if set the task, he did not doubt; but they were morally and physically incapable of any overt act of offense, such as he had to fear from Blackstock or possibly from the redoubtable Chang.

Throughout the morning he saw nothing more of Katherine. Without giving the matter really definite thought he had assumed that Blackstock would either come or send for him. Nothing of the sort happened, although he could not doubt that Blackstock was up and about; both coolies went to the bungalow about mid-morning to set it to rights; and intermittently throughout the slow, dull hours he heard the drum of the wireless spark, its whiplash crackling from a distance resembling a small fusillade of pistol shots.

The sound filled him with apprehensions. It was quite possible that Blackstock would think to settle any doubts he might entertain about the identity of his new aid by questioning Voorhis via wireless. In such event it was likely that the tissue of falsehood upon which he had bolstered up his position on the island would almost certainly be exposed. And then——

But however disturbing it might be to contemplate, the possibility of such a contretemps was not a stranger to Coast's calculations; he was prepared to face it. Should the wind veer in that quarter, he would simply have to fight. Only—he would give a deal to know positively.

To divert his mind and ease the irk of idle waiting, he set himself to explore the Cold Lairs. Though for the first time he examined the village in the cold light of day, it revealed little more than he had gathered in his previous experience in the spot. The buildings proved fewer in number than he had fancied—a mere handful, in fact; of them he discovered three which seemed to be in excellent repair, stout and weatherproof. They were all se-

curely locked and shuttered; a bit of information chiefly of moment in that it lent additional confirmation to the soundness of Appleyard's theory—if, indeed, any more were now needful to support Coast's personal convictions. That they were the storehouses of the distributing depot seemed unquestionable.

He spent a long time in unavailing search for the rowboat alleged to have been stolen by Power, at length concluding that if it were anywhere in the settlement it must be under lock in one of the storehouses.

The location of the spot where the body of Power lay might easily have escaped notice—there was no sign of recently turned earth in the village street, the rain having presumably obliterated every trace of the grave—but for the blind collie. As he entered the desolate precincts of the place he caught sight of the animal stretched at length upon the ground at about the place he would have guessed Power had been buried.

At the sound of his footsteps it rose, growling and bristling, but when he spoke it seemed to recognize his voice and suffered him to pat its head, showing evidences of gratitude in a subdued and dejected way; and when he moved on, followed at his heels for a while, but presently deserted him to nose its way back to its place of mourning.

Touched by this exhibition of devotion, Coast presently returned to the animal, endeavoring by kindly words and friendly treatment to inspirit and console it, but without success. Its grief was yet too recent and too poignant to yield to human sympathy. Beyond an occasional thump of its bedraggled tail, or a low, heartbroken whine, he received no response from the dog; still the brown and tan muzzle remained at rest between the outstretched paws above that unmarked grave, and as always the glassy, opaque, and colorless eyeballs told nothing.

At length, wearying, he left it so, and wandered down to the beach, where the catboat, bobbing at its mooring, provided him with an excuse for many minutes of idle dreaming. In his fancy it represented a possible means of escape for Katherine and himself, should worst come to worst—if only he were able to lay hands on its tender in the moment of emergency! Not only was that lacking, however, but there was no other manner of reaching it—save by swimming; and he questioned Katherine's ability to swim that far, if indeed she were able to swim at all.

Furthermore, he had no way of making sure that the boat was seaworthy; to his eye it rode low and sluggishly, as if half full of water; while its sail might prove to be no more than a tattered rag, its halyards rotten.

He moved slowly and disconsolately away, wondering, pondering, planning eternally against the machinations of the unforeseeable, than which, he felt in his heart, nothing could be more certain—on No Man's Land.

Some time after noon one of the coolies found him strolling aimlessly along the beach, and called him to luncheon.

Again in the farmhouse kitchen, attended by the two unresponsive Chinese, he ate listlessly, his gaze fixed upon the elevation of the bungalow, visible through the open window. He saw no sign of Katherine, nothing of Blackstock; the due departure of one John with tray and hamper was the only indication that the place was still inhabited.

He stopped the servant at the door and intrusted him with a message to Blackstock, inquiring whether or not his services were desired. Even though his first attempt to discharge the duties of a wireless operator were to result in his unmasking, he could not much longer hold himself in rein; anything were preferable to this agonizing incertitude.

While the man was away he received something of a shock. Noiseless in his thick-soled felt slippers the man Chang came downstairs and into the kitchen, his great, gaunt frame dwarfing not only all it contained, but the room itself. He said nothing, responding to Coast's brief diplomatic nod by

nothing more than a steady and enigmatic stare. The American could see no signs of bodily infirmity in the fellow's actions; he moved with decision and an air of sullen dignity; but there was a hint of pallor beneath his ochre-tinted skin, and the bandage round his head just above the eyes bore witness to the shrewdness with which Appleyard had smitten.

Seating himself in a chair adjacent to the door, he fixed his heavy-lidded eyes on Coast, narrowing them until the pupils gleamed like embers between the slits, and so maintained his gaze, steady and unswerving—his face with its high cheek bones and heavy lips wholly naked of expression, though hideous as one of the masks his countrymen fashion for sale to the foreign devils.

The answer came back from the bungalow; Mr. Black would send for Mr. Handyside when he needed him.

Toward the middle of the afternoon he found himself dawdling in the neighborhood of the bungalow, drawn thither irresistibly. He approached from the north—the direction opposite the end in which the wireless station was installed. As he rounded the corner, with purpose to go directly to Blackstock, he passed out of observation from the farmhouse, and simultaneously caught sight of Katherine through one of the living-room windows.

She was standing on the threshold of the operating room, evidently about to leave it; one hand rested on the knob of the door, ready to draw it to. Her face was turned away as she looked back into the farther room, so that Coast saw only her profile. Clad in its customary costume—the short tweed skirt, trim, high-laced boots, and heavy linen blouse—her slender figure was poised with an effect of graceful vigor and youthful elasticity; it required the sharpened solicitude of the man who loved her to penetrate beyond that first visual impression and divine that she was tense and rigid with emotion and nervous strain. He read in her attitude something of alarm, surprise, consternation, and assumed submissiveness; and understood that a crisis was passing.

Moving silently to the main entrance, he waited there where she could not but see him when she turned back into the room.

From beyond her came the rumble of her husband's voice. He was speaking quickly and with force, but Coast could not hear what was said.

The woman waited, moveless, until his voice dropped. Then she said quietly, in an ordinary tone: "Is that all?" To which apparently he assented. She added: "Very well. I'll be ready." She closed the door and saw Coast.

In an instant her face was bloodless; only her gaze leaped to his eyes like a leveled flame. Her hands moved suddenly toward her bosom, hesitated halfway, and fell slowly, fluttering. She sighed profoundly.

Then abruptly, as she recognized that he was frightened for her and in another moment would hurry to her side, heedless of consequence, she resumed command of herself with an astonishing effort of will; the small hands tightened at her sides, she lifted her head, closed her lips tight, and stood momentarily at attention, listening to some noise beyond the door.

The silent moment ended in the crashing of the wireless. At the first report, as if released from a spell, the woman moved quickly over to the door. Her hand closed imperatively round Coast's forearm. In obedience to its pressure he stepped to one side, so that the wall of the house hid him, should Blackstock open the door to the operating room without warning.

From colorless lips her voice came low but clear:

"Listen, Garrett—don't interrupt. Something has happened; we are leaving the island to-night! Hush—don't speak; his hearing is abnormally sharp. He has just told me. A boat is to come for us. He didn't say when—after dinner, some time, I understood. He told me to go and pack up a few necessaries for us both."

The noise of the wireless ceased, and she stopped speaking in the same

breath. Immediately, in the hush, Coast could hear the hiss of the switch thrown out to divert the current from the sending apparatus to the detector.

"He's listening for the answer, now," he ventured, in a guarded tone.

"Hush!" she told him sharply, whispering. "Wait!"

She inclined her head, sedulously on her guard, and for a while seemed to hold her breath. The hand upon his arm was trembling violently; he put his own palm over it with a strong and reassuring pressure.

"Steady, dear!" he murmured. "Don't be afraid."

She shook her head with a futile effort to smile bravely. "Only be quiet," she begged.

A minute passed, and another, and yet another, the pause filled with the dull drone of the dynamo and the steady humming of the gasoline motor. Then again the spark began to talk—*crash—crash—crack—crack—crrrash!*—and once more she felt it safe to speak.

"He warned me strictly to say nothing of this either to you or to the servants, but told me to go and call both you and Chang—that he wanted you at once."

"No explanation?"

"None; he seemed to think it superfluous—with me."

Coast's fears conjured up a miscarriage of Appleyard's plans. Somehow, perhaps, the little man had failed to regain Quick's Hole in time to prevent the escape of the *Corsair* or that of the crew of Blackstock's confederates which had manned the motor boat. In such case they would employ the quickest way to communicate with No Man's Land. But, on second thought, that seemed highly improbable; if the motor cruiser had been able to get off the shoal, she would have proceeded at once to the island; if her crew had escaped, leaving the boat, they could not well have found a means of wireless communication in such short time—the nearest Standard station being that on Montauk Point.

No; the warning must have come from outside—possibly from New York. Appleyard's advices to the Treasury Department might have resulted in a premature arrest of Voorhis, vice president of the Standard—undoubtedly a prime factor in the conspiracy; and the news would most certainly have been flashed out to No Man's Land. Or, again: Appleyard had spoken fondly of commandeering the services of a revenue cutter at that time in the neighborhood of Nantucket. Wireless instructions to such a vessel might easily have been picked up by Blackstock's detector, and, especially if not couched in code, have given him the alarm.

But speculation was just then outside his sphere of interest. His first, his whole, and his only duty was to Katherine.

"Don't worry," he begged her, in a hurried whisper "we'll find a way out. Appleyard won't fail us—and if he should, I'll find a way to steal that boat and get you off. Either that way or another. Now go, while I see what he wants of me. I'll say I met you on the way. Go quickly; we've delayed long enough—heart of my heart!"

This last was in an undertone, as the woman, taking fright at the brusque cessation of the wireless racket, disengaged her hand and, with the briefest glance by way of adieus, hurried away toward the farmhouse.

Alone, he lingered for a little where she left him, striving to collect his faculties and take thought against this unanticipated turn of events. Thoroughly mystified, disturbed, and depressed, he drifted into a deep and somber reverie which might well have endured beyond his knowledge had not the stationary motor chosen an early moment to choke off with a series of guttural snorts and stop dead.

The unlooked-for suspension of its contented working song left a distinctly audible void in the stillness, in which the key of the droning dynamo ran down the scale to a sour whine ere ceasing altogether. Roused by this, Coast pulled himself together and hurried round the building to the door of

the operating room, listening—and with shameless elation—to the storm of anger which followed Blackstock's recognition of the disaster.

A chair scraped roughly on the floor and fell with a crash; something else was thrown violently down; Blackstock got his breath deliberately and—the doors and windows of the operating room became jammed with blasphemy. Discreetly Coast paused and waited until the man's tongue began to falter, until the oaths escaped from him a trickle rather than a deluge, until he stopped short, his system drained to the last drop of profanity. Then Coast advanced.

He found Blackstock striding to and fro and mumbling a cigar, the scowl that darkened his countenance testifying abundantly to his humor and suggesting, besides, a state of mind, of perturbation and anxiety no less acute than Coast's. Even had he lacked Katherine's warning, Coast would have been quick to guess from his appearance—and this entirely aside from his pettish rage because of the balky motor—that something had happened seriously to complicate the man's schemes. He displayed every sign peculiar to one who to the physical unhappiness following a night of dissipation has had added grave reason for mental disquiet.

He was in shirt and trousers only, with loose, heelless slippers on his stockinged feet, flapping noisily as he walked. Unshaven and slightly inflamed, his face had undergone a notable change since last Coast had seen it; a photographer might have suggested that it was a little out of focus, an artist that its values were blurred and out of key; his features, never sharp or delicate, seemed just swollen and distorted—somehow heightening the satyric resemblance. Faintly red of rim, his prominent eyes possessed the hard luster of ebony buttons; beneath them the lids were puffed. A few dank locks of hair—evidently long a stranger to the comb—strayed stringily down over his broad, pugnacious forehead, black against its pallor. In his plump and swarthy cheeks there was a hint of hollowness; and his wide and full under lip sagged pendulous. The furrows from nose to mouth had deepened. An ensemble little less than repulsive.

Never in Coast's knowledge of him had he bodied forth so blatantly the type he stood for—the man of crude passions, undisciplined and violent, strong as a force of nature, weak with the weakness of those who cannot curb their appetites, acknowledging no law save of their own making, and by those very laws confounded and destroyed.

With all his self-evident preoccupation, his senses were keenly on the alert, the quickness with which he picked up the all but inaudible sounds of Coast's approaching footsteps strongly bearing out the claims the woman had made as to the acuteness of his hearing. As the younger man approached, Blackstock stopped short, facing the door with a lowering look.

"Who's that?" he demanded sharply, with a nervous gesture plucking the unlighted cigar from between his teeth. "You, Handyside?"

Coast entered. "Mrs. Black said you wished to see me."

"I would to God I could!" Blackstock cried wrathfully, dashing the cigar upon the floor. He lifted his clenched hands and shook them above his head, his features twitching. Abruptly he dropped them. "Here," he said curtly, "what d'you know about stationary motors? Everything, I suppose?"

"Not quite," returned Coast pacifically.

"Then what the devil are you doing here?"

"I'm supposed to be a wireless operator——"

"Oh, y'are, eh?"

"Not a skilled mechanic," Coast continued evenly. "Still, I know a little something about motors. Anything I can do?"

"You can take a look at that engine, if you don't mind. It fainted dead a few minutes ago. It hasn't had any attention since Power quit and left me in the lurch, curse him! I can't tell

whether it's oil or gas or water it needs. Perhaps you can."

"I'll have a try," agreed Coast.

With an impatient grunt Blackstock resumed his walk, guiding himself in and out among the furniture and machinery which cluttered the room with his habitual but still extraordinary ease.

Going to the back of the room where the motor was installed, Coast instituted a rather cursory examination; he did not greatly care whether he could make the motor run or not, and, singularly enough, since he had entered the room, had received from something indefinite in Blackstock's demeanor a deep if intangible impression that the latter was almost equally indifferent—that the motor had selected a time to stop when its usefulness to Blackstock was practically at an end, and had so provided an excuse for an explosion of rage incited by some wholly uncorrelated circumstance. It seemed highly improbable that he would have announced his intention of quitting the island before his plans were perfected; his resentment, therefore, was in all likelihood mostly directed against the swing of affairs which had decided him upon that move at a time he held inopportune and inconvenient.

Furthermore, it was not to start a balky motor that Blackstock had summoned him.

The sound of Blackstock's footsteps ceased behind him, as he bent over the machine, and he was conscious of the uneasy sensation of being watched—which, of course, was absurd, the man's affliction brought to mind.

"Well?"

"Haven't found it yet," said Coast, though this was not strictly true; he had already hazarded a shrewd guess, with the confession of neglect to guide him.

"Look here, what d'you suppose has become of the *Corsair?*"

"One guess is as good as another, isn't it?"

"What d'you mean by that?"

"That I don't know."

"You'd think Finn 'd 've managed to get her off by this time—eh? Wouldn't you?" Blackstock grumbled.

"Without outside help, I'd judge it a pretty tough job."

"Well, but with help?"

"Not so easy to get, under the circumstances. That wind would very likely keep the Sound clear of ordinary traffic, and even to-day, up to some time after noon at least, there ought to be a fairly rugged sea running to keep smaller craft at their moorings."

"Oh, you think so, eh?" commented Blackstock, with an accent of irony that made Coast straighten up and look over his shoulder. But the man was not even facing him, and he could gather little from his expression. "That's all very well," he continued, "but it happens that I advised Voorhis of their fix last night, and he sent a tug down from Vineyard Haven this morning. The tug reports no sign of the *Corsair.* Now, what d'you know about that?"

"It's not easy to explain," said Coast, in perhaps too placid a tone. It was difficult to subtract from his voice the exultation he felt. So Appleyard had been successful, after all! That was a moiety of news to cheer his heart wonderfully. He ventured an obvious and irritatingly stupid observation: "Then they must have got off somehow, during the night."

"Looks that way, doesn't it—even to a blind man? But then——"

"Perhaps some accident to the machinery."

"Finn never permits an accident to machinery under his care."

"You never can tell."

"Finn can," snapped Blackstock decidedly.

"You ought to have him here, then," said Coast disgustedly, turning the conversation of deliberate intent, by now fully convinced that Blackstock had been making talk to kill time—or else to make it for some occult purpose. "You've about ruined this machine, as far as I'm able to judge. The lubricating tank's dry as a bone, the bearings are so hot I can't bear my hand

on them, and the chances are the connecting-rod babbitt has burned out. I can't tell how bad it is without taking the motor down, and if I'm right it's an expert's job. Where's your cylinder oil? A good dose of that will ease matters a bit until I can investigate without blistering my hands."

"Over there—that large can in the corner," Blackstock indicated.

To reach it Coast had to pass between the man and the door. As he did so, temporarily off his guard, Blackstock stepped suddenly to his side. Grasping Coast's right wrist with his left hand, he thrust it up smartly, interposing his shoulder to prevent it from coming down as he released it, and simultaneously passed his own right arm across Coast's chest, seizing and pinioning his left. Having him thus helpless in one of the simplest of jujutsu holds, Blackstock thrust his left hand into his pocket, withdrew the automatic pistol, and let him go with a shove that sent him reeling and staggering back against the wall.

"I've been wanting this toy ever since you mentioned it last night," he said calmly, balancing the weapon in his palm. "It's one of my rules that no arms shall be carried on the island, and fearing you might refuse me——"

Coast waited to hear no more. Dumb with rage—to be so tricked and bamboozled! to have his teeth drawn in such a manner, by a blind man, almost without a struggle!—he stooped, picked up a heavy monkey wrench that lay at his feet, and threw himself at Blackstock.

Before he had covered half the scant space that separated them, however, he was caught up suddenly from behind, jerked back and held, struggling, kicking, helpless as a child, in the arms of Chang.

As if he were wholly unaware of what was taking place, Blackstock's voice rumbled on: "——adopted this means of making my wishes known. I trust you won't resent it when you wake up to the reasonableness of my attitude. You weren't hurt—of that I'm sure—beyond your feelings, perhaps. And," he added suavely sardonic, "I beg to apologize for the indignity, Mr. Handyside."

TO BE CONTINUED.

Two weeks hence, in the first October issue—the big Western Number—you will get the next installment of "No Man's Land." On the stands September 10th.

ONE DOLLAR PER HANDSHAKE

JIM OWENBEY, the mine owner of Colorado, and Arthur C. Johnson, of Washington, never shake hands on meeting each other without first matching coins for a dollar. Johnson ran across Owenbey in a hotel not long ago, and started to shake hands with him. He checked himself, however, and remarked:

"I almost forgot about that dollar."

Owenbey had already fished into his pocket for a coin. The two put their coins on the desk, and Johnson won. Then they shook hands, and Owenbey solemnly handed over the dollar bill.

They refuse to explain why they go through this unusual ceremony when they meet.

FROM DECKHAND TO SENATOR

Governor Broward, of Florida, who will soon be the new United States Senator from his State, began life as a deckhand. He has made good with his people by his work while governor in reclaiming the Everglades and converting them into good farm lands.

Stung

By George Bronson-Howard

Author of the "Norroy Stories," "Speaking of Heroes," Etc.

It doesn't do to judge all men by externals. Jack O'Rourke, gambler, card sharp, "wheelman," forgot that and took little Freddy Vangelder at his face value. What happened after that—that's the story

ONE night Eddie Grogan, otherwise known as The Swinging-door Kid, and I were standing on a cold corner in Spokane. We had thirty cents between us, and we were deciding a momentous question: Should we blow it in for ham and eggs and go sleep in the sawdust heap just outside the Elk, or should we sleep like gentlemen for fifteen cents per head at Old Mother Ship's.

Just then a man drove by in a sleigh, with two big bay mares, a silver-fox lap robe, and a Russian sable collar to his coat. In his tie was a diamond stud that would pawn at a couple of thousands, and his horses' trappings were silver mounted. His name was Daniel Peters; he owned three city blocks; and The Swinging-door Kid and I had once hoaxed him out of a hundred dollars or so.

Therefore Eddie says scornfully:

"There goes that sucker!"

I laughed for two minutes at a stretch. Eddie did not know why; and I didn't trouble to explain. To the grafter every one who doesn't graft is looked down upon as one with inferior brain power. There is no use in trying to explain that this is a fallacy; that the crook has only one advantage over the honest man—a lack of scruples. Take away this lack and the average honest man with brains is more than his equal.

For Heaven knows, little Freddy Vangelder, if anything, fell below the average; and yet he got the better of Jack O'Rourke, and that, gentlemen, is going some.

Jack had one of the worst reps of any man outside a dime novel. If there was a form of the graft that Jack hadn't dabbled in, it must have been in use before history began. He had invited speculation as to the nimble pea; he had owned the pickpocketing privilege with a medicine show, sold rubber plantations in Honduras, "stalled" for the Dude Horan "wire" gang, carried dice shaped like dominoes, and indulged in many other discreditable professions.

At the time of which I write Jack was running the Casino at Nome. He began with a faro layout, a "brace" game with fifty-three cards; prospered hugely; bought some roulette wheels; and turned honest.

It was the combination of the latter two circumstances that ruined him. Presently you will see how. Just now you must be presented to him thriving on dishonesty with fifty-three cards in his little faro box.

I am not going to encumber my yarn by telling you the difference between honest faro—played with fifty-two cards—and the crooked one that Jack played with fifty-three. Briefly I may state that honest faro is the fairest gambling game invented, "the house" having a very small per cent. in its favor. But the extra card changes all that, so that the player has perhaps one chance in five of winning anything.

Such a game as that naturally has to have a "booster." The booster is a man officially attached to the gambling house, but taking great care to conceal the fact from the public. He dresses well, always has plenty of money to spend, and is pointed out by the initiated as a "lucky" gambler. For he almost invariably wins; generally at a time when the other players have stopped, disgusted with their luck. And he wins enormous sums because his stakes are always large.

By this time you will have gathered that the stakes are furnished by the gambling house, and that there is a little reckoning between the proprietor and the booster after the house is closed, which consists in the booster handing back his winnings and receiving his daily salary and a sum of money with which to bet the next day and encourage the laggards with his splendid luck.

Your humble servant was the booster for Jack O'Rourke's gambling house; and that is how he comes to know so much about the inside history of these things.

It is now about time to introduce little Freddy Vangelder, who was about the easiest-looking come-on who ever gladdened the sight of those who look upon the law as the common enemy.

Freddy was on a trip around the world, and he came to Alaska as a sightseer, pure and simple. He was not concerned with the mad rush for gold—not he. In the inside pocket of his beautifully cut Norfolk jacket he had ten one-thousand-dollar bank notes. These, and some others spent on his leisurely way from New York, his father had given him for his circumnavigating tour. When he reached London and met his father there he would have more. But not until. Papa had emphasized that point.

After one day in Nome Freddy would have taken the next train out—if we had had such things as trains. But the boat did not leave for Seattle for two weeks. He had originally intended to run up to the Chilkoot Pass; spoke of it as a visitor to Naples speaks of running over to Pompeii, until he was enlightened as to the number of weeks it would take.

So Freddy abandoned himself to our simple pleasures. He bought some "mucklucks" to decorate his rooms at home, and a Malamoot dog that bit him; had a white bear's hide converted into a motor coat, and lived luxuriously on beans, eggs, and champagne. Also he frequented dance halls and gaming houses.

Ours chiefly. For he had a great respect for O'Rourke as one who had "killed his man." In a way, Jack deserved respect. If he was a villain, he wasn't ashamed of it; nor did he flaunt it in one's face. He was a wiry, pallid, silent fellow, who, to quote the popular saying, "would kill you just to see which way you fell."

Freddy did not play very high in the beginning. He was not a gambler by nature; and did it chiefly to kill time. But I defy an idler with money in his pockets and a gambling table next door to him to keep his head long.

For people will not learn that no one ever profits by gambling except the man who owns the game. But the worst of it is that amateurs generally combine their gaming with strong drink. And then the God of Luck, disgusted, goes and sits on the dealer's shoulder.

Freddy was heavier by three quarts of champagne—a portion of which had been shared by an individual called by some the "Big Moose"—when he entered and stood watching the game with bright little eyes. The Big Moose looked around for Jack, for "Missou" was presiding over the layout. And when he found Jack at the back, eating his supper, he informed him as to Freddy's condition.

"I want my steer per cent., Jack," he said. "I've filled the little guy up with a system and he thinks he can't lose. He drunk enough to let the roll go—the whole bunch of grands, and he's got ten of them. And if he does, don't forget I've been steering him."

The Moose's wife, Gretchen, kept

the Hotel What Is It, at which Freddy was stopping. The Moose himself was a gentleman of leisure except for an unofficial attachment to the gambling houses; it being understood between him and the proprietors that he should receive the usual per cent. on any one who lost over a thousand dollars in their places, should he bring the loser there. He was most anxious to be considered as one of the gang. But the real crooks laughed at his pretensions; and The Swinging-door Kid, who spent his spare time reading Dickens, had likened him to Noah Claypole, whose specialty was taking away pennies from children sent out to buy beer.

"His heart's about as big as a flax seed," Eddie was wont to say. "If you can make a man out of that six feet four of adipose tissue, I can make a watch that'll give milk."

I'll do Jack O'Rourke the credit to say that he despised him; for Jack's courage and nerve were bywords in the Northland. But "steerers" are necessary to a gambling house, and the Moose could have made a good living filling toy balloons.

Jack went out to take Missou's place at the layout, and pretty soon Freddy was playing havoc with his thousand-dollar bills. He lost nine of them in half an hour, and he would have lost the tenth could he have found it; but he had taken it out of that pocket to change earlier in the evening, and it had slipped into a hole in the lining, where he found it next morning.

But he thought he must have dropped it at the hotel, so, drunk as he was, he staggered out of the Casino, across the street to the What Is It, thereby accelerating the plans of the Big Moose.

I got these details many years later from Freddy himself in New York, and by adding two and two the customary total presents a very pretty piece of treachery on the part of the Moose, quite worthy of the famous charity boy. For it involved no risk to himself, and stood a chance of profiting him greatly.

To explain:

The Moose's wife had saved quite a bit of money by running the hotel. Her ambition now ran to a gambling house. But there were already three gambling houses in Nome, and a Miners' Meeting, composed entirely of gamblers, bartenders, and wheelmen, had decreed that the fair morals of Nome would deteriorate should there be more than three.

How, then, should the Moose and his wife start a gambling house? The answer was simple. Get one of the proprietors of those existing put out of business and buy his stock. And to discredit one, it was only necessary to prove that he ran a brace game.

The Moose, therefore, kept his eyes about him, and discovered that Jack had an unwarranted number of cards. Whether Missou told him in one of his drunken fits, or whether the Moose had taken a stealthy count of the cards when the house was closed, or how it happened, I do not know. Certain the Moose strongly suspected it.

It was a more difficult thing to prove, for Jack O'Rourke could shoot from his hip before most men had made up their minds to draw. Some one must openly accuse him when the playing was going on, and force a count of the cards taken then and there. It was only necessary to tell the sheriff, Buck Reade. Buck wasn't afraid of Jack, and he could shoot with almost equal dexterity. But the Moose knew he couldn't trust Buck to keep silent as to his informant, and if Jack were killed, the gang might revenge themselves upon the cigar-shaped person of the Moose.

Freddy made an admirable catspaw. It was arranged between the Moose and Gretchen that Freddy should lose the money at Jack's layout, and that the Moose should remain in Jack's sight, precluding any possibility of the Moose having informed him of the extra card. Freddy, having no place to go after losing his money except the hotel, Gretchen should then condole with him, tell him of the crooked game, and advise him to take Buck Reade to investigate. If it got out that Gretchen had told, nobody would kill a woman;

she could make a great show at virtue, saying she wouldn't see a child like Freddy robbed; and become very popular with the suckers, who, after all, were chiefly necessary for their proposed gambling house.

Now, I'm simply giving you my figuring in the matter; of course, none of us had an idea of it at the time, for the Moose stayed behind after the dash for —the missing thousand-dollar note. He seemed as surprised as any of us when little Freddy came hiking back, not drunk now, but very excited and trembling all over and accompanied by big Buck Reade. Of course, we didn't know what was up; but Buck had that curious grin of his own that came from nervousness and a desire to show he hadn't any nerves.

There must have been twenty-five people in the place; ten or twelve playing; the others gathered around the horseshoe bar that ran parallel with the layout table. Hardly any members of the gang were present; just Jack and Missou, the "Put-him-in-the-clear Kid," and myself—for I don't count the Moose, and neither did anybody else at the time. So we were four against the sheriff and the twenty-five suckers; and every man-jack of them was, to quote Eddie, "packing a cannon on his hip." For these were the days of the vigilance committee, and it had only been a week before that the King of Skagway, "Dope Smith," had been shot down on Nome Beach by the little civil engineer.

It was indeed a bad time for a man to be caught cheating at cards; and I mentally said good-by to earth; for in the gun fight that would assuredly follow, I knew I must declare "in" with my pals; and we didn't stand much chance, with the odds seven to one against us.

"He cheated me; he cheated me!" little Freddy shouts suddenly, unable to bear the tension of so many eyes upon him. And it seemed that I smelled sulphur and brimstone already. "He cheated me out of nine thousand dollars. He's got fifty-three cards in that box, and I want my money back."

"Yes, yes, kid. All right, kid."

Buck was grinning wider than ever now, for he knew that at any minute a pink puff was liable to come from Jack's hip, through some trick of legerdemain which Buck himself was almost able to equal; and anywhere within a radius of fifteen yards Jack could drop him. So he took the bull by the horns and marched smack up to Jack's side.

He didn't make any foolish play like tapping Jack on the shoulder. His hands were at his sides, and he was watching Jack's. Also he was trying to keep tab on the Put-him-in-the-clear Kid, who was keeping cases; and he tried to include Missou, in the lookout chair. But chiefly he watched Jack's hands.

"He cheated me!" shouted Freddy again, who evidently was dead to a sense of danger or else believed that Buck was ample protection. By this time there was a lot of murmuring going on around the room, and the Moose, no doubt, was considering how long it would take him to get behind the big stove in the far corner of the room, where he would be comparatively safe from chance bullets. Every one was watching for Jack to move, and the minute he did a dozen guns would be snatched from holsters at the waist or beneath the armpits.

"The kid says you've got fifty-three cards in that box, old-timer," remarked Buck, licking his lips with the tip of his tongue so that their dryness wouldn't interfere with his grin.

But Jack had a grin to match it. Reprovingly, he looked up and addressed the sheriff.

"Listen, Buck," he said. "What do you want to take a chance of seeing somebody through the smoke for? You ought to go into a baby's nursery, where you'd be at home, and put your head between your hands and try to think. I know it 'u'd be hard, but just try it. Taking the word of a 'cheechaka' like that against an old sidekicker! Honest, Buck, it's a good thing all around that I can keep my temper. Many a man 'u'd make a play

with his hardware for less than that——"

He paused and let a low whistling sound indicative of utter contempt slowly filter through his teeth.

"Fifty-three cards—fifty-three cards!"

He pressed down the spring of the faro box, and slid the pasteboards out.

"Fifty-three cards, is it? Well, I can't do any fairer to the company than count 'em for you, Buck."

He began to deal them out, shaking each one as he did so, and throwing it down under Buck's nose.

"One, two, three, four——"

It took a long time to count out the whole pack; and Missou and the Clear Kid and I didn't breathe while he was doing it. For we knew that before he reached fifty-two he would have to throw down two pasteboards together, taking a chance that it would go unperceived. And it did. It went unperceived, even by me.

"Fifty-two," he counted at last.

"And now," he added, gathering them up again. "For the benefit of anybody who still thinks there's an extra card, I'll count 'em all over again."

Jack O'Rourke had an iron nerve. With nearly a score and a half guns ready to bark and bite if any of two cards fluttered, he put his life in jeopardy a second time, in order that no one might go unconvinced; and again I went through a nerve-racking crisis that silvered some of my brown hairs.

But it was splendid, superb.

By the time he had counted ten, he could have thrown in three or four extra cards and still make us think he had only fifty-two. And once again even I didn't know when he threw down the two cards.

But you are not to think there was any trick attached to it. The extra card was in the pack all the time. It was purely a triumph of mental persuasion.

"Fifty-two," he said again. "Satisfied, gentlemen?"

He stood up with the pack in his hand.

"Anybody like to count them?"

Nobody stirred. Jack walked to the stove, lifted the lid, and threw the pack in.

"Gentlemen," he said. "I have played my last game of faro in Nome. I have been accused of cheating. It is the first time. It will be the last. I expect some roulette wheels by the *Solomon Jones*. Until they arrive this place is closed."

There were murmurs of protests, but Jack held up his hand.

"Nothing doing," he said; then he turned to Buck Reade.

"It wasn't your fault," he said. "I'm not sore with you, Buck. Nor with the little guy, either. Somebody put him up to this. Some day I'll find out who it was."

II.

As I hinted before, little Freddy told me of Gretchen's share in the matter many years later. And I now take advantage of presenting the scene between Freddy and Gretchen on the young gentleman's return to the What Is It.

"You were mistaken about there being fifty-three cards in that box," he said ruefully. "There were only fifty-two, and I'm afraid you've got me disliked in Nome."

Gretchen tried to keep calm until things were explained to her, and asked him if Buck Reade had counted the cards.

"No. But Jack did. Right under his nose. Twice. And then he pitched the pack in the fire, and said he felt so bad about being called a cheat that he wouldn't ever play faro in Nome again."

Crisply, in words that hurt like heated needles, Gretchen told Freddy what she thought of him. And as she came to her peroration Freddy began to think the same things.

"You haven't got a head," she concluded. "It's a peanut. An after-dinner coffee cup would make a sunbonnet for you. If you ever had an idea in that nut of yours, it must have been a tight-rope walker. You're the original mutt. You're bone from the shoulders up. You breathe through your

ears like a fish. You—so you let Jack O'Rourke get away with that, did you? You let him count the cards after I told you there was fifty-three cards in that box!"

"Was there—honest?"

Fifteen minutes later, when Gretchen had told Freddy a lot more things she thought about him, she was surprised to note from his abstracted gaze that he had not been listening to her; and when he looked up it was to say with obvious sincerity:

"I'm going to get back at Jack O'Rourke for that."

"You get back! You couldn't get a cold in the morgue—— You——"

"Yes, I know all the things I am," said Freddy ungratefully. "But I'm going to fix Jack O'Rourke; you see if I don't. I can't leave here now because all my money's gone. I'll see George Scott to-morrow and go partners with him on his claim, and I'll stay in Nome till I fix Jack O'Rourke."

But Gretchen did not wait to see him keep his word. When the Moose returned home she kept him indoors until the boat was sailing for Seattle; and then she sneaked him out at five a. m. in the morning and put him aboard ten hours before the other passengers arrived. She returned to quit the What Is It herself in the dignified light of day, escorted by Phœnix Bob, who had bought the hotel; and she smiled scornfully upon Jack O'Rourke as she passed him in front of Farrel's dance hall.

"Gret," said Jack very courteously, taking off his brown slouch, "some day he'll hand you the same double cross he handed me. I can't wish you any worse luck than being doubled up with him."

Freddy Vangelder had but one idea—to get revenge upon Jack O'Rourke; and while he patiently washed sand on Snake River he thought of his deferred trip around the world, and his heart was heavy with hate. He had gone into partnership with George Scott at first on Claim Fifty-two; but he had some knowledge of mining engineering, and he soon staked out a claim for himself farther up. It wasn't much of a claim for those days; no nuggets or big chunks of quartz with bigger chunks of gold mixed in. No; just ordinary pay dirt that, if you washed assiduously, would net you about thirty-five dollars a day, after paying expenses.

Freddy washed assiduously for several weeks; and then he came to town with a bag of dust worth about six hundred dollars. By this time Jack O'Rourke's roulette wheels had arrived. Freddy walked into the Casino and stood watching the play, his bag in his hand.

In well-regulated countries they have a limit at roulette and other games of chance. But Nome had only the Northern Lights for the limit. You could wager anything that the proprietor thought he could pay off if you won.

Generally the gambling was done with chips. And for a very good reason. Most of the people who bet came with bags of gold dust, like Freddy's, only larger. These were "hefted" by the wheelman to calculate about how much they were worth, and that amount was given you in chips. If you lost these, the wheelman threw you your bag and a memorandum slip of the amount you had lost. You took these to the "lookout," who emptied your bag, weighed the dust, and gave you what was over, or debited you with what was under, the amount the house had gained by your play.

Always the bag was given back to you. Because you had not bet the bag, only *what was in it*.

But there were venturesome gamblers who risked all on a single journey of the little ball around the basin. They would enter with their bags and place them directly on the layout. Which meant that they bet the contents of the bags just as another person bet a five, ten, or a hundred dollars. When the ball had fallen the wheelman threw the bag to the lookout, who emptied it and threw it back; if you won, he shouted the amount in dollars your dust was worth, and you were paid ac-

cordingly. But, as I said before, you always got back your bag; because you had only bet *what was in the bag.*

Freddy joined the band of the bag betters. After watching the table for some time, during which one of the first twelve numbers had come up three times, he finally reached over and placed his bag of gold dust half on the green cloth outside the numbers thirteen and sixteen, and the other half on the yellow line that divided these numbers from one another.

"Playing the third six?" asked Jack O'Rourke from the lookout chair.

Freddy nodded. Jack took a good look at the bag and decided there wasn't over five hundred dollars in it. If Freddy won, the bank stood to lose three thousand dollars; but Jack had something like ten times that amount in his safe, so he nodded to the wheelman to let the bet stand.

The little ball whizzed around the basin, and after some dancing about dropped into thirty-one. Jake Schwartz had the *carrière* containing that number covered with five double eagles, and Missou paid him nine hundred dollars. Freddy's bag was tossed to the Clear Kid, who emptied his dust and tosed it back to Freddy.

Freddy went out, his heart heavier by the loss of two-thirds of what Jake had won. The next morning he was washing pay dirt again; and three weeks later he again entered the Casino and placed a similar bag to the one he had lost on the same six numbers.

And once again he lost.

Another month passed before Freddy showed up again, and this time his bag was slightly larger than before. But Jack O'Rourke hadn't the heart to refuse the bet, although the bank roll had been heavily cut into by a big winning the night before. Freddy had always meant ready money to him before; why not now?

Freddy was faithful to his six numbers. And this time they showed that they were worthy of his confidence. Seventeen came up, as seventeen has a habit of doing more often than any other single number. And Missou gave the Clear Kid the bag to weigh in.

There wasn't much high play at that time, and, anyhow, most everybody was anxious to see how much Freddy had won; so Missou's, "Place your bets, gents," didn't get very much attention at the time. We were watching the Clear Kid as he spread a sheet of paper on the scales and emptied Freddy's gold dust upon it, holding the bag up until the last grain of dust should drop on the scales, and then making the motion of one about to toss Freddy back his bag.

"Wait a minute," said Freddy. "You haven't got it all out yet."

"Every blessed grain," said the Clear Kid sourly, for business was bad.

"You haven't," persisted Freddy, and, taking the bag from the hands of the lookout, he reached into it and pulled out what you have been wondering about ever since I told you he hadn't lost it—that last one-thousand-dollar bill.

"There's eight hundred in dust, and with that 'grand' the total is eighteen hundred——"

He turned to Jack O'Rourke.

"Pay me ten thousand and eighty dollars, please!" he said.

Jack jumped out of the chair, and grabbed up the thousand-dollar note. Over he came to the green-covered table, and held the note under the lamp. It was as soft as an old kid glove; evidently oil had been rubbed into it. One side of it was slightly torn, as though it had been suddenly jerked away from something to which it had been fastened. Jack threw down the note and turned Freddy's bag inside out; there, sure enough, was something sticky at the bottom of it.

"That note's been pasted at the bottom of that bag every time you bet it," said Jack sternly. "And every time the note was handed back to you. If you think I'm going to pay you on it now, you're mistaken."

"If the note was there, you were welcome to it before," says little Freddy very coolly, "I always bet what was

in my bag, and that's what I expect to get paid on—*what's in my bag.* Ten thousand and eighty dollars, Jack, please."

And what's more, Jack had to pay him, for the crowd got ugly and upheld Freddy. If it had been a winning crowd, things might have been different, but Jack had the money they had sweated weeks to get; and they weren't going to let a chance pass for making him pay through the nose. Moreover, the soldiers were in Nome, and, while a gambler's death might be overlooked at the hands of a crowd, any one connected with the late Dope Smith and assassination would be as comfortable in Nome as a pole cat among tiger pussies.

So Jack handed over the major portion of the bank roll to the scion of the house of Vangelder, who, after stowing it safely away in the flap pockets of his trim Norfolk coat and buttoning the flaps, remarked sweetly to the Terror of the Northland:

"After all, fifty-three cards is a very clumsy way of getting money, Jack."

And Jack O'Rourke, mulcted and knowing it, for the first time respected Freddy Vangelder.

Why?

You remember Eddie Grogan and me standing on a cold corner in Spokane, and watching Daniel Peters go by? You remember, also, what Eddie called him? Well, if Daniel Peters had made five dollars a day out of thimble-rigging, instead of two hundred out of real estate, Eddie would not have called him a "sucker." Instead, he would have said:

"Pipe the wise one over there!"

And Daniel Peters would have joined us, and we all three would have slept in the sawdust outside the Elk Saloon.

TWO MORE THINGS HE SAID

NOW that Colonel Roosevelt is back in the United States, two remarks which he made while he was in the White House, and which have never before been published, are interesting.

On one occasion, after he had finished an interview with Jim Jeffries, he said laughingly:

"If it should ever happen that I should again run for public office, there are three votes I could count on—Jim Jeffries, Bob Fitzsimmons, and John L. Sullivan."

A few days later one of his friends pointed out to him that he was being savagely attacked in a certain newspaper.

"They can say what they please," was his comment, "but I've had a good time being President, and they can't take that away from me."

ACCORDING TO APPEARANCES

Robert Wickliffe Woolley, the writer, was standing one evening at the main entrance of the Palm Room in the Willard Hotel in Washington waiting for his wife to join him. A stranger stepped up to him, asking:

"Can you find me a table for eight people?"

"You'd better see the head waiter," suggested Woolley with some indignation.

"Oh," said the stranger, "I thought you were the head waiter. You were standing here at the door with a dress suit on and looking as if you owned the whole place."

Queering a Crooked Deal

By Frank L. Packard

Author of "The Night Dispatcher," "Contraband," Etc.

A story of high finance that opens with a chance encounter on Broadway and a generous act that looks like the attempt of a big-hearted fellow to pull another out of a hole and do it delicately. It is something of a detective story too, with a real mystery.

THERE is not much use in describing a man like Charles K. Waters, magnate of iron, steel, railroads, and I guess, for that matter, with a lien on about all the natural resources of the earth in general and particular. Usually, he is in the limelight, and the Press Association has spent a small fortune in photographing him in "typical poses." Everybody has seen him or his picture. The one thing, however, and a very pertinent thing to this story, that the cuts do not show, naturally, is his voice. Waters' voice is bigger than the man himself, and that's saying a good deal. When Waters talked in an ordinary tone—for him—you could hear him about a mile away; if he were a bit riled, and he could "rile" quicker than any man I ever knew, he'd roar so that you'd imagine some one was trying to murder him, or the whole world was conspiring to rob him of his possessions down to the last penny.

But I am getting a little ahead of my story. Back at Yale, class of '96, Waters and I had been about as inseparable as Siamese twins. After graduation, he had gone his way, and I had gone mine. He had made a tremendous success, but he still had worlds to conquer. I went him one better—the hash I'd made of things was beautiful in its simplicity, and the last word had been said. I guess I had tried about everything from mining in the Yukon to laying track in South America. I'm not quite sure in my own mind exactly how valuable experience is, but in hard cash it represented just thirty-five cents in my pocket, the morning the Panama packet boat unloaded me on the dock at New York. Of course I'd heard of Waters during that time, just as everybody else had; but I'd hit the down grade almost from the start, and that had kept me from writing him.

There have been some changes in New York in the last thirteen years, and I had almost forgotten the lonesomeness of that thirty-five cents, as I came up Broadway staring my eyes out. It was around one o'clock when I got up as far as Twenty-third Street. As I stood gawking at the Flatiron, I got a thump on the back that nearly knocked me over, and some one grabbed my hands and began to jerk both arms up and down like pump handles, until I thought the sockets would work loose.

"Bill-ee Reynolds! You long-lost son!" a voice was roaring in my ears.

Of course it was Waters. Before I could say a word the questions were coming at me like the quick fire of a Gatling, and all the time those sharp black eyes of his were taking me in from head to foot, boring like augers. Glad to see him I most certainly was,

but I can't say I felt exactly comfortable. I looked respectable enough, and my collar was clean, but a suit *will* show wear after a couple of seasons no matter how careful you are of it, especially if you've been in the tropics.

"Well," said he, "you might say you're glad to see me."

"I haven't had a chance," I returned.

"I guess that's right," he laughed. "Well, I'll give you one. I was just going to lunch. Come on, old boy, we're blocking the traffic. You weren't going anywhere in particular, were you, Billy?"

That sounded humorous to me, but I didn't let on.

"No; I wasn't going anywhere just now," I said, as though I had a few minutes to spare before annexing a five-dollar gold piece at some board of directors' meeting.

"Well, come on, then," he cried, scooping up my arm.

I don't know what restaurant it was to this day, for I didn't pay any attention to where we were going, but we landed up at a table in the corner that a potted palm or two screened off from the rest of the room.

Waters ordered rather substantially, and I didn't make any objection. I was pretty hungry.

"Now," said he, when the waiter had gone, "I'm no monopolist, though I've been accused of it, and it's your turn. How's Billy, and how's the world been using him?"

"Fine as silk," I lied.

"Good!" he exclaimed heartily. "Tell, Billy, tell. I've never been able to get track of you. I've had about a dozen letters go to the dead-letter office."

"I've moved around a bit," I explained.

He nodded. "I dare say. What are you doing, Billy; still engineering, of course?"

Well, there I was in for it for fair. Maybe it was false pride and all that sort of thing, but I'd rather have bitten my tongue out than tell him the truth. In my own ears, at least, it would have sounded like a "touch," though I knew well enough that old Waters wasn't the kind of chap to take it that way. Anyway, I'd started in to lie, and it was up to me to carry through the bluff.

If I had connected with any small part of what I told him, I would have had the banks bidding for my patronage instead of being my own safety-deposit vault for thirty-five cents. Perhaps I put it on a little too thick, though I threw in a few losses here and there to water the dividends. That cocktail sort of warmed me up, I guess, and stimulated my imagination. I talked between bites, and he listened. By the time we got down to coffee and cigars, I was explaining that track-laying job in South America—I was the contractor, and had just run up North for a trip.

"Bully boy!" he exclaimed, beckoning the waiter. "Here, waiter, check, please."

The waiter laid the check face down on the table, and as Waters turned it over I couldn't help seeing the amount. Four dollars and eighty-five cents.

The waiter had retired to a discreet distance after placing the finger bowls on the table, and Waters was fishing in his pockets. I wasn't paying much attention to him. That café had a smell of the old days, and I was just absorbing it for all I was worth. Mind you, thirteen years is a long time—sometimes—and sometimes it's not. An exclamation from Waters brought me back to cases, and the next minute he had flipped that four dollar and eighty-five cent check over across the table to me.

"Confound it!" said he, "I must have left my pocketbook at the office. Settle it, Billy, and I'll give it back to you later."

If there had been a hole in the flooring connected with a nice greased chute that would have dumped me square in the subway about two feet in front of an express, and somebody had kicked my chair from under me and let me shoot, that somebody would have earned my everlasting gratitude—if gratitude counts for anything where I'd have gone. I couldn't say a word. I just sat there like a tongue-tied idiot,

and I could feel my face getting redder and redder and little prickly feelings chasing themselves up and down my back. I wouldn't put in the duplicate of that minute—not for some!

Waters didn't smile. There was a different look on his face that I didn't quite understand until afterward. Maybe I was too flabbergasted. Anyway, the next thing he did was to take a roll from his pocket, and coolly peel off a double-X.

"Billy," said he abruptly, as though taking up a matter we had already discussed to a finish, "the Catskill express leaves at three o'clock. Get off at Green Hollow. There's a stage there will take you up to The Glade. My name is Ford when I get there, which will be around nine to-night. Just keep your mouth shut. Here's expense money."

"No, thanks," said I, waving it back. "I'm ready to admit that I——"

"Don't be an ass," he snapped shortly. "This is business. I want some one with me there that I can trust, understand?"

"No; I can't say I do," I replied.

That bunch of money looked like a great big-hearted fellow's attempt to pull another out of a hole, and do it delicately. I guess my clothes had sort of given me away in the first place, then I'd overdone it plastering on the yarn in the second, and he'd caught me with my hands up in the air with his little trick for a finish.

He looked at me pretty hard, and then he laughed. "You're a bigger mule than ever, Billy," said he. "I know what you're imagining, and we'll get to that in due time. I'm not through with you on that score. The fact is that I've a deal on with another man that both of us, for reasons of our own, prefer to keep quiet for the present. There's some engineering involved in it, and it's a godsend to have some one whom I can trust absolutely turn up so opportunely; and not only turn up, but have no pressing business to prevent him doing this for me.

"Of course I don't want it known that I'm up at The Glade, as I understand there are other interests after the same matter that I am. Also, I think it best for us to go on separate trains; then, once up there, we can appear to be chance acquaintances only. There is no occasion for the gentleman I am to meet becoming aware that I have taken the precaution to re-verify his plans at the last moment. Now, can you swallow your pride long enough to get it into that thick head of yours that I really want to use you? Why, hang it, Billy, I was going to ask you anyway as a favor, don't you see?"

"It isn't much clearer," said I; "but I guess I'm not posted on high finance. Well, I'll go. What's The Glade?"

"It's a hotel. I'm glad you've come to your senses," he said, as I pocketed the money. "Don't hesitate to use any you need if you want to get anything. Now, you'd better skin along, old boy, or you'll miss that train. Just remember to keep mum. I'll see you to-night."

I went out of the café in a whirl, but I didn't have time to think much on my way to the train. When I bought my ticket, I found that Waters had given me two hundred dollars. I knew he meant, by telling me to get anything I needed, that I should refit; but I wouldn't have done it even if there had been time, which there wasn't. As it was, I just got the rear handrail after a sprint down the platform.

The more I thought things over in that smoking car on the way up, the more I came to the conclusion that the only deal Waters had in view was to put a broken-down old college chum on his feet again. I couldn't annex the secrecy business any way I looked at it.

By the time I got off at Green Hollow, I wasn't drawing any more conclusions; I was convinced that Waters had just simply called my bluff in his own little way, and the business was for my special and particular benefit. The unmerciful jolting of the stagecoach on the two-mile drive to the hotel just tamped down this idea and set it good and hard, like a layer of concrete. After all, it was just like old Waters to do a thing like that, and I'd known him long enough and well enough to make

me feel a little sore at myself for having tumbled so easily.

It was pretty late in the fall, and the evenings closed in early, so by seven o'clock, when I reached the hotel, it was already dark, and I didn't get much of an idea of my surroundings. I got a room, took dinner, and after that there was nothing to do but wait until Waters showed up.

I hung around and made myself as inconspicuous as I could. There were too many swallow tails and low necks to make me feel very sociable and homelike with the rig I was sporting. I was getting grouchier and grouchier, and I guess by the time the stage arrived at nine o'clock I wasn't fit to talk to, even if I'd had a monocle and a spiked suit to wear.

I was sitting in the rotunda when I heard the wheels rattle outside, and I slewed around to watch for Waters. I would have gone out to the veranda, only I had enough dignity left not to join the stampeding bell boys. Three men came in, walked up to the desk, registered, and one by one were shot upstairs in the elevator. When the bustle had toned down to the previous frigid, high-class zone, you could have knocked me down with a feather. No Waters! That's all there was to it—no Waters!

I got up then and walked out to the entrance, stared at the lights of the bus lumbering around the corner of the house, and then I walked back again into the rotunda and sat down in the same old chair. That sounds foolish, doesn't it? Well, that's the way I felt—foolish. I guess I sat there half an hour trying to puzzle it out, then I jumped from the chair and made for the desk. Of course!

"What time does the next train from New York come in?" I asked the clerk.

"Last one is just in," he answered. "There's one for New York at ten o'clock."

I didn't say anything for a minute, but I guess I must have looked enough from the way he stared at me.

"Well, give me my key," I blurted out finally.

There was nothing to do but turn in, and I crossed to the elevator. Just as I was stepping into it, a bell boy stopped me.

"Mr. Reynolds, sir?"

"Yes," said I.

"There's a gentleman in thirty-eight would like to see you, sir."

"See me? I guess you're mistaken, sonny. What's the name?"

"He didn't say, sir. He just described you. You're Mr. William Reynolds, aren't you?"

"Yes," said I again; and then: "Well, lead on, sonny."

I didn't have to wait for the door to be opened before I knew who was inside. There was no getting away from the "Come in" that answered the boy's knock. It was Waters' voice all right.

Once in the room with the door shut, I stared at Waters without saying a word. There he was, cool as you please, his dinner set out on the table of his sitting room, and a paper propped up against a carafe in front of him.

"Well, I see you got here all right, Billy," he remarked.

"Yes; *I* got here. But when, and how in blazes, did *you* come?"

"Nine o'clock train, Billy. There's more than one door to this hotel, and my room was waiting for me. Just make yourself comfortable till I finish my dinner—I couldn't get anything on the train—and then we'll have a good old powwow."

"No," said I; "I don't think I'll wait. I'll begin right now. You saw through my little bluff this noon all right; but it's my turn to call. You might just as well have saved yourself the trip out here. You've got me cornered for a night, and while it's about as white and decent a thing as a man can do, I won't budge an inch. I won't take a penny, and that's flat."

He just sat there and grinned at me, and then he began to whistle.

"So that's it, eh? You thought I was bluffing, too. Well, Billy, you make me feel a little ashamed of myself, because, to be perfectly frank with you, I haven't had your interests in mind quite as much as you are crediting me

with doing. What you are mistaking for a bluff involves something like two million dollars."

"How much?" said I weakly.

I found a chair, and sort of collapsed into it, and the smallest chair would have been about like a number ten boot, man's size, on a kid's foot. I caught the idea of having overrated my own importance all right, and I didn't need printed instructions any more to understand that Waters really had something on hand besides me, or he wouldn't have sneaked into the hotel in the quiet way he had done. I began to see that Waters, Yale '96, and Waters, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ten, totaled up some differently.

"Well, Billy," he was saying, pushing back his chair, "if you don't feel like waiting, I guess I've had enough dinner, and I'll get into the game myself. I've a dashed good mind to begin by breaking your neck. Why, you confounded little beast, do you call it square to treat me the way you did to-day!"

His voice had got into the roaring swing I referred to a while back, and I heard some one outside in the corridor pause as though listening.

"Don't talk so loud," said I meekly.

"Breaking your neck would be less than half of what you deserve! Do you call it square? Do you?"—he was keeping at it, paying no attention to my caution. "That's the way you rated me, is it?—no, I'll take that back, because I know it's your pig-headed, mulish pride. But I thought you'd remember the old days even before that, and that I'd be the first you'd come to."

"I haven't been to anybody," I managed to cut in.

"No! And when I run into you, you hand me out a string of lies that, if you expected me to believe them, were no compliment to my intellect. I call it playing an old chum pretty low down mean, though I suppose you warp it around somehow into the poor-but-proud fiction type of chivalry. Rot! You're flat, aren't you?"

"Yes; I'm flat," I admitted. "But for Heaven's sake don't talk so loud. I thought you didn't want anybody to know you were here."

"They won't know who I am. Now, what's wrong? Tell it straight this time, Billy?"

"I guess I got in wrong all along the line. That's the long and short of it."

I didn't feel like going into details, they were too harrowing; and anyway it wasn't necessary.

"What have you got in view?" was his next question.

"Nothing," said I.

"Well, I guess you're willing to work. I never knew you to quit. Would it be too galling to your pride to accept a position with me?"

"Oh, don't rub it in, Waters"—I was feeling about the way a stray cur looks when he sails along with his tail out of sight. "If you've got a job that I can hold down, I'll take it quick enough."

"I've been offering you one in each of those dozen letters you never got. It's still open. I want another engineer. Three hundred a month, and expenses, to start on."

"Look here," I began, "I——"

"You'll have to work for it, my son, don't worry," he broke in. "I'm no politician. You'll start in to-night, and that brings us back to the deal that's the cause of us both being up here at the present moment."

He got up from the table, went into the bedroom, and came back with a little hand bag. He took out a package of papers and handed them to me.

"Look them over some time before you go to bed," said he. "They're a government survey map, my engineer's report, and the description of a mining property out in California. There are other interests around it I may want to acquire later whose owners, so the man I'm buying from tells me, might think they were justified in boosting prices if they got wind of this, understand? That's why he's coming East to meet me here as Mr. Ford, instead of in New York as Mr Waters. Is that clear to you, Billy?"

"Yes; I guess I can get that all right," said I a little sheepishly.

I was thinking that, after all, Waters knew his own business a little better than I did, and that sometimes his own offices weren't the best place you could pick out, even if he did want to keep things quiet. There were a few kinks in the way I'd doped things out coming up on the train. I came to the conclusion they were all kinks, and then and there just mentally sponged them off the slate.

"The man's name is Swenton, Colonel Howard T. Swenton," Waters was going on. "He'll be here some time in the morning, and he'll have the deeds of the property and the maps and plans pertaining to it. Post yourself up on what I've just given you, so that you can verify them. If it's all right, I'll close at once. Now then, Billy, that being settled, let's get back to old times."

Getting back to old times used up a couple of hours, and would have used up more if I hadn't had those papers in mind. So, at about half-past eleven, I guess it was, I called a halt and got up from my chair.

"If I'm going to do anything with those papers to-night and be ready for the colonel in the morning, I'll have to go to it," said I.

"Well, I suppose you had better," said Waters regretfully. "Where you going, Billy?"—I was heading for my room.

"Why, to my room, of course," I answered.

"No; don't do that. You can look over them here. I'm going out for a stroll and get a little fresh air before turning in. I guess it's late enough so I won't be noticed. You can wait for me here. There may be something you'll want to ask me, and I probably won't be long, anyway."

"All right," I agreed, going back into the room. "Just as you say."

Waters snipped off the end from a fresh cigar, and, telling me to help myself from the box, put on a cap and went out.

I took a cigar, drew up to the table, spread out the papers, and settled down to work.

That engineer's report was a corker, and about a hundred pages long. I got interested right from the start. One or two little points I marked down to ask about as I went along. You can't read stuff like that and digest it in a hurry, and it wasn't until I'd turned the last page that I thought of either time or Waters. I sort of felt that he had been gone quite a while, but I didn't have any watch, so I didn't know what time it was. Anyway, he had said to wait for him, and I decided to do it comfortably now the papers were off my hands. There was an easy lounging couch in the room, and I stretched out on that, and before I knew it I was off in dreamland.

When I woke up I couldn't get my bearings for a minute, but the lights were still burning in the room, and I remembered then where I was. I got up and looked out of the window. It was still dark, but just beginning to show the first streaks of dawn. Dashed queer, I thought, that Waters would let me sleep through like that, for of course I imagined he must have come in, found me asleep, and gone into his bedroom without disturbing me. I moved softly over to the bedroom door and listened. It was open, but I couldn't hear any sounds of breathing. Then I went in and switched on the light.

Waters wasn't there, and the bed hadn't been touched!

What was the meaning of it? He had left the room for a walk at about eleven-thirty, it was somewhere around five in the morning then, as nearly as I could judge, and he hadn't come back. Had he met with an accident, been hurt; or did he know his own business better than I did, and would give me anything but thanks for butting in?

That idea kind of quieted me for a minute until I remembered he had said that he wouldn't be gone long, and knowing I was waiting for him he'd have been sure to turn up if only to kick me off to bed.

The more I thought the more I made certain something was wrong. I

couldn't very well go turning the hotel upside down, putting everybody wise to the fact that not only was Mr. James Ford no other than Charles K. Waters, but on top of that, that Charles K. Waters was missing. Whatever I did, I'd have to do alone, that was a sure bet.

My own room was in the same corridor, and I sneaked down there for my hat, then I got out of the hotel by a side door so that I didn't have to go through the office. I didn't have any set plan; because, in the first place, I couldn't put the puzzle together. Waters had gone out—I went out—if you can get the logic of that.

There was a fine drizzle still falling, and during the night it must have rained heavily. The grass was soaking wet, and the road, where I crossed it going to the golf links, was no better than a mud puddle.

Mind you, I didn't know what I was doing. I mean I hadn't anything definite to go on. One minute I was pretty uncomfortable, and the next I made sure Waters and I would be laughing over the thing as a joke along about breakfast time, and then I'd feel like kicking myself for digging up a mare's nest.

I made a circuit around the hotel in an aimless sort of a way. Across the golf links, past the road again, up behind the hotel through the pine grove, and back to the road. No sign of Waters, of course, and there wasn't much sense in what I was doing.

There was no telling in what direction he had gone when he left the hotel, but the idea kind of got me as I reached the road, after making the circle I've described, that the most likely place for a stroll would have been the road itself. It hadn't been raining then, and it would be better walking on a black night than to go stumbling through the fields and grounds in the dark. If he had taken the road, he could only have gone in one direction—toward the station—for the road began at the hotel and ended at the station, or vice versa, whichever way you want to put it.

I started off down the road. Part of the way it led through open fields, and part of the way it was rough and hilly, with thickets on either side. It's two miles, as I've said, between the hotel and the station, and two miles of worse going I never tackled—the mud, half the time, was over my boot tops, and, from splashing and one thing or another, my trousers were soaked to the knees.

I don't know whether I had any distorted idea of coming across Waters' mangled body or not; but, if I had, nothing of the kind eventuated. I didn't get a trace of him.

When I was still half a mile from the station I heard a train whistle up the line. The early morning train for New York! Perhaps Waters, for reasons best known to himself, intended taking it.

"By Jove!" I muttered, and started on the run.

There was nothing doing. I had still a hundred yards to go when the last car pulled out from the platform. Panting and out of breath, I stopped. From behind me came the splash and clatter of horses' hoofs, wheels wallowing through the mud, the protesting groans of overworked axle springs, and I spotted the lumbering, top-heavy, old hotel bus.

For a minute, I had visions of negotiating that two miles of back track in a good deal more comfort than I had experienced on the way down—and then, for very obvious reasons, I cut out of sight. It was up to me to get back to the hotel just about as much on the quiet as it had been to leave it.

I left the road and started through the woods, heading for the rear of the station, with the idea of striking the far end of the platform and, after the bus had gone, quizzing the agent.

When I got there and peered around the side of the station, I saw that the train had left a passenger. He was talking to another man, who I supposed was the agent, while the bus driver was loading the newcomer's baggage. Presently the bus drove off with the passenger, and the station agent came sauntering back up the platform. I

left the shelter of the station, and went toward him.

He stopped short when he saw me, and eyed me up and down.

"Good morning," said I.

"Say! Where did you come from?" he demanded abruptly. "What's going on around here? What's the game?"

"Game! What game?" I asked sharply.

He shrugged his shoulders. "I dunno. That's what I want to find out. You're the second one that's showed up here this morning looking as though he'd been prowling around all night. If the other's your pal, he's——"

"What's that you say?" I cut in quickly. "Another man around here? Where is he?"

He jerked his hand down the line. "On the way to New York."

"See here," said I earnestly. "What did he look like? Describe him, will you?"

The agent looked me over suspiciously—one of Waters' five-dollar bills went his way.

"Come inside," he invited affably, "and take a chair."

"No; I haven't got time. You can tell me what I want to know here. Go on, man!"

"There isn't a whole lot to tell. About five minutes before train time a chap came up to the wicket and bought a ticket for New York. Of course I knew he wasn't from the hotel, unless he was trying to beat his board, because he'd have come down in the bus."

"But the bus wasn't in time for the train," I said.

"That's just it—no passengers to go out. Old Joe never hurries under those circumstances—anybody arriving can wait till he gets here, see?"

I saw; but that wasn't what I wanted to know. "Well, go on," I prompted. "What did he look like?"

"He looked about the same as you do, only worse. A little more mud if anything, and his coat was soaking wet—he'd been out in that storm we had last night—he'd been out all night, I guess. It looked dashed queer to me, just as you look coming in on top of him. He had no overcoat, and wore a little peaked cap pulled down over his face. I say it's queer for more reasons than one. He had plenty of money, and when there's a place to go and the wherewithal to pay for it, a man doesn't hang out in last night's weather for choice."

"Waters! By all that's holy!" I said to myself.

Waters had gone out, I remembered, with no overcoat, and he had worn a peaked cap; but what the devil it all meant was getting beyond me—and then I got a jolt that brought me up with a round turn.

"I'm not much on descriptions," the agent was saying; "but since you seem so interested I'll do my best. He had black hair, and only one eye. Clean shaven, and altogether a rather tough-looking proposition. I'd say at a guess he'd go about a hundred and fifty-five pounds, though he was neither so big nor so tall as you—more wiry, got his weight from bones, if I'm any judge—why, what's the matter?"

"Nothing," said I—and there wasn't. Waters had *two* eyes, that was all, and was big enough to make me look like a dwarf. This fellow was no more Waters than I was. The station agent said it looked queer. It did! It began to look queerer than I cared to think about. And the presence of this stranger began to smell infernally like foul play.

"What did he say for himself? Didn't you question him?" I demanded.

"Sure I did," grinned the agent. "He told me a whole heap. He just said: 'Go to blazes! Give me my ticket, and mind your own business!' Perhaps you, now——" he insinuated.

"No," said I. "I don't know any more about him than you do. I thought at first it was some one else. Good morning."

He followed me down the platform and watched me go. When I got to the bend of the road and looked back, he was still standing there scratching his head; but I had other things to think of apart from him.

It was six o'clock when I left the sta-

tion, and I don't believe I was more than thirty-five minutes getting back over those two miles. I left the road a little before I got to the hotel, and sneaked in the same way I'd come out. The first thing I did was to go straight to Waters' rooms with the half hope that he was there, though deep down in my heart I knew he wasn't—and he wasn't. As I came out a bell boy passed me going down the corridor.

I went to my room. Waters had gone—disappeared! Where, how, why? Heaven knew; I didn't! A man in his position, with his enormous wealth, was likely enough to be the object of attack for any one of a hundred reasons—from the common footpad, looking for the money he might be carrying on his person, to some scheme involving millions that might be blackmail, ransom, or a dozen and one other things.

How he could have disappeared was the most puzzling thing. Automobiles were out of the question. We were deep in the hills, and there were neither automobiles nor roads—just the road from the station to the hotel, that was all. There were no trains between the time Waters had left the room and the one I had seen pull into the station. *That* one he hadn't taken. But who was the fellow that had? What had happened?

I started for the door. A man cannot vanish into thin air. Waters, dead or alive, must be somewhere.

Preserving Waters' incognito now seemed a matter of very little consideration. The thing to do was to alarm the hotel and institute a search. And yet I hesitated to do so, held back by a feeling that perhaps, after all, the whole thing would explode in some ridiculous situation that would not only make a fool out of me, but would interfere seriously with Waters' plans.

It was light now, and I'd put in a couple of hours' search myself—after that, if he were still missing, would be time enough to make it public.

I didn't waste any time near the hotel, because I made sure that if anything had happened Waters' body wouldn't be left where it would be found by the first person who went out in the morning—but there is no use detailing that second search; it was equally as fruitless as the first. There was no sign of Waters anywhere. I turned back to the hotel with my mind made up to give the alarm.

This time I didn't make any attempt at concealment, and headed straight for the main entrance. A man was pacing up and down the veranda. I saw him halt beside a bell boy, and the bell boy point in my direction. As I reached the veranda, I recognized the man as the passenger who had arrived by the morning train.

"Where is Mr. Ford?' he snapped abruptly, stepping in front of me.

I didn't like the way he spoke, I didn't like the looks of the man, anyway. I hadn't had any breakfast, I was worried, tired, cross, and everything else you can think of. I brushed him aside, and passed on. He grabbed my arm.

"See here," said he, "my name is Colonel Swenton. They tell me that you are—er—acquainted with Mr. Ford. He expects me. In fact, that's what he and I are both here for. Where is he?"

"I don't know," I answered, and I said it the way I felt.

"You don't know!" he repeated, and he might just as well have said I lied. "That's very strange. Perhaps you'll come to the manager's office with me."

"That's where I was going," I replied. "You can come along, if you want to."

In about ten minutes after I'd told my story, the place was in an uproar. First, the hotel and buildings were ransacked from top to bottom by the employees, then the guests got wind of what was up, and, forming themselves into little parties, started out to search the surrounding country. None of them knew who Ford really was, except Colonel Swenton, the manager, and myself.

Manager Fulton was for notifying New York at once of the magnate's disappearance, but Swenton argued strenuously against this until there was something more definite to go on, point-

ing out the furor it would cause, to say nothing of the effect it might have on the "market"; and Fulton finally agreed.

I swallowed a bite of breakfast, and joined the last party going out. I hadn't any hopes to speak of, for I had already been at it since daylight; but it was better than doing nothing. Most of the crowd seemed to think the excitement was a godsend got up for their special benefit. I stood them for an hour, and then I quit and started back for the hotel.

As I approached, I saw that something was up. Little knots of guests were congregated around on the veranda. I quickened my pace. Everybody seemed to stare at me in a way I didn't like particularly. Fulton and Swenton met me as I went in, and Fulton nodded toward his office.

With the door shut behind the three of us, the manager took a cap and a torn shred of cloth from his desk and handed them to me without a word.

The cap, though soggy, wet, and crumpled, I knew to be Waters'; the cloth was of the same material as the suit he had been wearing. My heart went into my mouth. I was afraid to ask the question that was on my lips.

"Have you found him?" I managed to get out. "These are his."

I saw Fulton and the colonel exchange glances, and then the manager cleared his throat.

"This is a serious matter, Mr. Reynolds," he said. "We have not found Mr. Waters. The best thing you can do is to make a clean breast of the whole affair."

"What!" I gasped.

"Acting won't do you any good, young man," cut in the colonel.

I didn't pay any attention to him, but I walked up to Fulton.

"You've said too much—or too little!" I shouted angrily. "Now, out with it! What do you mean?"

"I mean," he answered evenly enough, "that there has been foul play, and that you know and are probably responsible for whatever has happened to Mr. Waters."

For a second I came near mixing it then and there, then I cooled down a bit. There was no use going off half-cocked. Fulton didn't seem like the kind of a man to talk through his hat for the sake of talking. Something was up.

"Perhaps you'll begin at the beginning," said I as coolly as I could, "and tell me what you mean."

"I will," he responded bluntly. "To begin with, you're a little out of place in a hotel like this. You had no baggage, but you had money enough to pay for your room, and you got it. This is a pleasure resort; people do not usually come here for anything else——"

"You needn't mind describing my clothes," I broke in hotly; "and I'll save you the trouble of saying that I'm a suspicious-looking person. Go on."

"According to your own story," he continued sharply, "you knew who Mr. Ford was, and spent the evening in his room; but you did not see fit to tell us that you had a violent quarrel with him during that time."

"A quarrel! Great Scott, man," I cried in amazement, "what are you talking about?"

"Two of the bell boys stopped outside in the corridor and heard it. One of the guests also corroborates their evidence. They all state that they distinctly heard one of you—presumably you, in view of what has since transpired—threaten to break the other's neck!" He paused, and looked at me good and hard.

If I hadn't begun to get a glimpse of what looked like a pretty serious thing for me, I could have laughed in his face. As it was, I cursed Waters' outrageous voice under my breath.

"Why, that was only a joke," I managed to say.

"Ah, you admit it, then!"—this from the colonel.

"Indeed! I am afraid it would appear like a pretty grim joke to a jury, Mr. Reynolds," said Fulton coldly. "There has been foul play. The finding of Mr. Waters' cap and a torn fragment of his clothing is proof enough of that. This morning at half-past six you were seen coming out of Mr. Wa-

ters' room, and your clothes showed that previously you had been outside. Your own bed had not been slept in. You are the last person known to have seen Mr. Waters alive."

"But, good heavens!" I burst out. "I've explained all that. I told you that when I missed him I started out to find him, didn't I? It's simply absurd to connect me with his disappearance in any way. Why, if I had had anything to do with it, don't you suppose that I'd have pulled out of here in short order?"

"If you hadn't missed the train," sneered the colonel.

"If I hadn't missed the train! Are you crazy?"

"You are as cool a specimen as I ever met," said the colonel. "You, perhaps, are not aware that when I got off the train this morning I saw you running down the road at top speed, and watched you, when you saw you were too late to make it, dive into the bushes to hide."

I could feel my face color, I couldn't help it; and I knew Fulton's eyes were watching me sharply. I could talk until I was dumb, but I knew well enough it would be pretty hard to make anybody believe, under the circumstances, that I hadn't been trying to *catch* that train—I wouldn't have believed anything else myself. To say that I had gone there to see if Waters had taken it sounded too lame.

"Well?" demanded Fulton.

"There's no use of my saying so," I answered; "but I had no intention of taking that train; that's all there is to that. Supposing, however, that I had, and *had* missed it, would I have been likely, if I had had anything to do with Waters' disappearance, to come back here and tell you about it?"

"Seeing that you could not get away, and it had already been discovered by my sending to his room, finding him gone and his bed unslept in, I should say it was about the best play, from your standpoint, that you could have made," jeered Colonel Swenton.

I swung on him like a flash. His squinty little eyes and his oily voice were getting on my nerves until I could have caught him by the throat and shaken him till his teeth rattled. "I've heard enough from you!" I snarled. "Keep your mouth shut!" Then I turned to Fulton. "Well, what are you going to do about it?"

He was beating a tattoo with his pencil on the desk. "Added to what I have already told you," he replied quietly, "is the fact that at the point where these articles were found—at the other side of the pine grove at the back of the hotel—the ground shows that there has been a scuffle which, coupled with the piece of torn cloth, is evidence that Mr. Waters made a desperate resistance before he was overcome. I have telegraphed the details to the police in New York, and I have also advised them and Mr. Waters' office of Ford's identity. The police will be here at seven tonight, and until then I shall ask you to go to your room without any fuss and remain there."

"Which is exactly what I refuse to do," I retorted angrily. "You have no legal right to place me under arrest, and you know it."

"I don't know as I care to argue that point. The colonel agrees with me that you should be held. There is no sense in your making any trouble over this. If there is any redress on legal grounds, you can get it later; in the meantime you should be sensible enough to bow to the right of force."

"Oh, that's it, is it?" I snarled, backing to the door and throwing the colonel out of the way none too gently. "Well, I'm not so sure!"

There was one possession I had never pawned, never parted with. I'd got used to its companionship in the Yukon, out West, in the tropics, everywhere. I found it in my hand unconsciously. They didn't like the looks of it, and made no bones about showing their aversion. I can't say I blame them, for that .45 hadn't the appearance of a toy in any particular.

"Let me put you right on this," said I, spinning the gun by its trigger guard around my finger. "I don't know any more about what has happened to Wa-

ters than you do. But I don't propose to be held up on the strength of your imagination; get that? I'm not going to run away. I'm going to mind my own business in my own way, and if you've any respect for the health of yourself or your employees I'd advise you to act accordingly. That's all."

I guess Fulton knew I meant what I said, for I walked out of the office and out of the hotel without any one lifting a finger.

II.

I spent that afternoon in the woods and hills. Once or twice I caught sight of parties from the hotel searching for Waters, but I did not go near them, and they didn't bother me. I must have covered some ground myself, backward and forward, up and down, and I guess when it began to grow dusk I was a good five miles from The Glade. I had made up my mind all along that when the police arrived I'd go in and face the music, and I figured that from where I was it would be about seven o'clock by the time I got there, so I started along.

I was pretty well acquainted with the lay of the land by this time, and I didn't have much trouble with the direction; besides, I was higher up than the hotel, and at every clearing I'd get a glimpse of the lights. It was pitch dark by the time I got to the pine grove. I heard the train whistle below me for the Hollow—and then I heard something else!

There is wide, open ground just before you reach the edge of the pine grove, and I had crossed this and was just at the fringe of the trees. The sound seemed to come from space itself, queer, uncanny. I can hardly describe it, growing louder and louder, like the onrush, the whir of mighty wings, and, too, the subdued, pulsing beat of machinery.

Suddenly a long, thin arrow of light shot out from the heavens, swept the clearing before me in a wide circle, and vanished. Then something, a grotesque and fanciful shape, loomed black out of the blackness of the night above me.

For a moment I could feel the hair beginning to creep up on the back of my neck, and I stepped quickly into the grove to hide behind a tree. There was a soft thud as of some object striking the ground gently, and then, for a brief instant, silence. The light shot out again, playing along the edge of the trees; and then I heard a man's footsteps coming toward me.

By this time I'd got the lay of things, and likewise the fact that Waters' disappearance wasn't so much of a mystery as it had been; also, that the gentleman with the flash light might be *persuaded* to furnish a few interesting details. I waited until he had almost reached the trees before I spoke.

"You've come far enough!" I said suddenly, and let him hear the hammer click of my .45 to impress him with the fact that my advice was for his own good.

He stopped instantly; but his nerve didn't seem to be affected any, judging from his voice.

"Who are you?" he called sharply.

"Well, my name's Reynolds, if you think you'd feel any easier for knowing it," I replied facetiously.

"By George!" he cried. "What luck! You're the very man I'm looking for."

"You don't say!" said I. "I don't ever remember having had the pleasure of meeting you, though I guess we'll get a little better acquainted before I'm through. You're a cool customer, aren't you!"

Then he laughed. "I'd better complete the introduction, then. My name is Auld, Owen Auld."

I may have been out of the world for a few years, but there had been a stray engineering and scientific journal or two come my way, and I got the name all right. Who didn't know it! Auld, the aviator, the man who had startled America, Europe, the world, with his daring achievements, the man in whose brain alone was locked the secret of the successful navigation of the air. But, Auld or no Auld, it was certain that he was at the bottom of Waters' disappearance, and that was what concerned me. In fact, he admitted it in the next breath.

"I have come for you from Mr. Wa-

ters," he announced, still laughing. "Just drop aboard the *Eagle* and I'll take you to him."

"You bet you will!" said I. "But we'll go my way, not yours, Mr. Auld."

"Why, there's no danger. You're not afraid, are you?"

"Maybe," said I. "The point you don't seem to get, however, is that I'm rather anxious to find out *where* Mr. Waters is, and the surest way to find out is to ask you to accompany me down to the hotel. There's a bunch of detectives there by this time, and I don't mind having the burden of suspicion shifted from my shoulders. If it were daylight, I'd ask you if I looked like a fool. You kidnap Waters, and then have the concentrated gall to invite me into the same trap!"

"Oh, I see. Mr. Reynolds, you know Mr. Waters' writing, I suppose?"

"If it's as fierce as it was in the old days, I guess I'd recognize it, though I haven't seen it lately," I replied. "What about it?"

"I've a note from him for you."

"Produce it, then," I said, coming out from the pines and walking toward him. "No monkey tricks with that light in my face because it's liable to make my finger twitch! Hold out the note with the other hand, and throw the light on it."

I could hear him chuckle, but he did as he was told. When you know that both of the other fellow's hands are innocent of weapons you're pretty safe. I stepped up and read it. I knew the scrawl. It was genuine enough, and the wording was characteristic:

> Come along. You'll enjoy it after you get used to it—perhaps. WATERS.

"All right. That's good enough for me," said I. "Lead on."

We walked the few paces to where the aëroplane was lying. Auld bent over for a moment, and then handed me something that felt like a piece of stiff leather board.

"Put it on," he instructed; and then in explanation: "Wind, you know. Here, buckle it that way. You'll want these goggles, too. Now, I guess we're ready. In you go. Farther seat, please. Can you see?"—his flash light was picking the way for me.

There was a buzz, accelerating into a droning hum as the motor worked up its revolutions, then a swift upward strain as we shot into the air, and the dark mass of trees was below us. Instinctively I clutched the handrails of my seat and gasped for breath. It seemed as though the pit of my stomach had suddenly become abysmal.

Auld at my side chuckled. "Queer sensation, first time, eh? You'll get used to it. Too bad it's dark, and you can't see the scenery."

"I'm not so sure," I choked. "I guess I'd be dizzy enough to drop out."

Auld leaned forward in his seat, there was a little click, and a fluorescent tube, hidden under the guard hood of the front board, flooded a row of glittering instruments beneath it with a soft bluish light. He pointed to a needle mounting upward around its gauge disk.

"Aërostat. For altitude, you know. As soon as we make it, we'll hold at 3,000 until we're clear of the hills. They affect the lower levels badly. All kinds of disturbances, cross currents, impinging laterals, and Heaven knows what. There, 3,000, you see."

Auld gave a quick shift to the planes, the needle wobbled a moment and then held steady. A little accustomed to my surroundings, I leaned forward to read the dial. 2,998! I glanced down through the open framework at my feet—nothing but a shuddering blackness!

"There's a strata of cloud below us," Auld volunteered. "You'll be able to see the towns and lights when we dip, by and by."

"Look here!" said I. "Where are we going?"

"Chicago," he replied. "That is, a little outside of Chicago, to be strictly accurate."

"Chicago!" I repeated. "You're joking, man. Why, that's——"

"About seven hundred miles, roughly, in a straight line. West by south"—he jerked the toe of his boot toward the compass swinging in its brass box. "We'll be there by midnight, if condi-

tions on Erie are favorable. They were dead against me coming down, so they ought to be all right going back—can't tell, though."

I didn't say a word. I couldn't! I was doing a little bit of mental arithmetic that made my companion look dashed economical with the truth. Seven hundred miles in five hours, as nearly as I could figure it, was one hundred and forty miles an hour!

The little clock at our feet marked off the minutes, five of them, ten of them, a quarter of an hour. Around us was a vast stillness, save for the drumming of the wind on the tight-stretched silken fabric that covered the planes above our heads, and the constant pur of the motor, so fast in its revolutions that the note of its song never varied in tempo. We swept through a lighter bank of loose-flying mist and caught the faint twinkle of a few stars, then blackness again as heavier clouds shut us in.

"Fine night"—Auld broke the silence. "Everything our way. Not a breath that isn't a lullaby. Moon'll be up around nine-thirty, about the time we strike Erie, you'll see."

The sensation of the unreal, the unnatural, coupled with, I'm willing to admit it, an inclination to jump out of my skin every second, with my heart booming up in my mouth, was pretty well gone. I was feeling as though I had about got my "air legs," and my thoughts were getting around onto Waters again.

"I'd like to know how the devil you ever got off with Waters," said I. "He could chew you up alone, and I'm hanged sure he didn't go of his own accord—he had a little matter to attend to back there at The Glade to-day."

Auld laughed. "It wasn't very hard, though I'll admit he kicked up a little fuss at first. By the way, did you see anything of a medium-sized man, black hair, and rather disreputable I guess, for you must have caught that storm last night? You'd know him anyway, he's only got one eye."

"Oh, that's it!" I exclaimed. "So he was your fellow footpad, or airpad, whichever you want to call it. No, I didn't see him; but I heard of him. He got the early train for New York."

"He did, eh?—ah, look!"

We had shot like a rocket clear of the clouds that had been enveloping us, and now down, far, far below, like tiny luminous pin points, lights were scattered here and there across the dark background of the landscape; while farther away, ahead of us, was a dull glow like a patch of half-cooled, molten metal.

Auld waved his hand. "Elmira. We're making good time. We're clear of the atmospheric strata of the hills now. Now watch us shoot! Feel that breeze behind? If we catch it right we'll *travel*. Just keep your eye on the aërostat and speed meter, and brace your feet forward. Here we go!"

With a quick movement he jerked over the plane levers, there was a sudden dive, and we sped forward like the shell from the muzzle of a gun, soaring in a long downward flight. For a second I couldn't get it, do you understand? It made me crazy. Then my eyes fastened on the instruments he had indicated.

The aërostat needle was swinging backward, 2,500, 2,000, 1,800, 1,500; and beside it as steadily mounted the speed indicator registering the mileage, 150, 160, 170—180 miles an hour!

I could have yelled, screamed, with the wild, mad joy that gripped me. Fear! There was no such thing as fear. We were *gods!* The heavens and earth and all things therein were ours—*ours!* The sense of power, might, vastness, freedom, tore away the human and left only the infinite. It was terrific, beyond the mind to grasp.

A cluster of lights like the scintilla of diamonds passed in a flash below us—and Elmira was far behind. I sank back in my seat—weak—weak as though my strength had been literally drained out of me—I could feel the sweat rolling cold down my back—and Auld was laughing!

The aërostat was steady now at 500 feet, and the speed indicator was dropping back until it held at 148.

"Like it?" he called.

I gasped faintly.

He nodded. "It's worth a few years of life. We don't often catch it just right like that. For the rest of the way, unless something happens, we'll hold to the lower levels. There ought to be a favoring wind all the way to the lake."

We were skimming the ground now close enough to distinguish the shadowy outline of the scattered farmhouses as we passed, the lights in their windows, then a cluster of them, and for a second we knew that a village or town was below us; for the rest, it was the dim, hazy nothingness of a blackened film on a kinetoscope.

The motion was steady again, just the rush of the wind, the continuous, quivering tremor of the tense-strung frame from the motor vibration. I watched Auld for a long time. The light from the fluorescent tube threw him somewhat into relief, as he crouched forward in his seat over the wheel, upon which both gloved hands rested. I couldn't see his face, but I liked the cool, easy, confident attitude of his pose. Somehow, I had kind of taken to him right from the minute I'd held him up with my gun.

And yet he had admitted that he had kidnapped Waters! What for? What was the game? What was behind it all? Waters' note certainly didn't read as though he were in any danger, but he must none the less be a prisoner. Except that I was now morally certain that Waters was safe, the whole business was more of a tangle than ever.

I touched Auld's arm. "You may not know it," I began, in an effort to draw him out; "but there's been some little excitement back there at The Glade to-day. I was practically accused of having murdered Waters."

"There's been more excitement than that in New York," Auld laughed. "Your hotel manager wired in the story about noon, and we got it by special around one-thirty. That's why I came after you. From the garbled accounts, you seemed to be in a pretty pickle, and Mr. Waters insisted that I get you out of it."

"Well, but why in thunder didn't you send a wire from somewhere, saying he was safe? That would have settled the whole business. You could have gone anywhere you liked with this machine to send it so that the telegram wouldn't have given any clue to his, or your, real whereabouts, if that's what you were afraid of It's a dashed queer mess to me. What did you kidnap him for, anyway, in the first place?"

"The affair isn't altogether mine," Auld answered seriously, "and I'd rather not say too much; but I'll tell you this: There's a little matter some people were interested in persuading Mr. Waters to see the way they saw it, and until he was persuaded they preferred to have it believed that there had been foul play—of course you found the cap and the piece of his coat?"

"Yes," said I grimly. "They were found."

Auld nodded. "There is another gentleman at present back there at The Glade we didn't want to alarm. Do you understand?"

"Oh, yes," I growled, "it's as clear as mud. I know as much now as I did before. I'm not sure I wasn't a bit soft to swallow that note, and not do a little kidnapping with you myself, when I had the chance."

"Last opportunity," he grinned. "A pocketful of guns wouldn't do you any good up here. There's Erie now—catch it? And there's the moon just coming up yonder. Pretty, eh? But we'll get it even better over Michigan."

A thin silvery streak ahead grew gradually wider and wider as we approached until it broadened out over our entire range of vision. We were above it. The moon rising just behind our shoulders cut a long shimmering path of golden light across the water. Here and there we caught a sparkle of phosphorescence, the flash of lights, and a thin black trail of smoke as some steamer churned her way along. Once a wild cheer was wafted up to us.

"Moonlight excursion," said Auld. "Too bad we haven't a whistle or something to answer them with. Buffalo's over there to the right. We're cutting

the northern end of the lake. You'll get Detroit's glow in a minute. There it is now, see?"

Faint at first, the lights of the city soon sprang like a barrier of flame across our path, then melted into individual points. We were low enough to get a jumbled medley of streets and squares, numberless black moving objects, people, cars, teams, buildings, then the fields again, and the glow growing fainter and dying away in the distance behind us.

"Rather enjoying it, aren't you?" asked Auld.

I was. That part was all right, but there was something that wasn't. There was a new kink in my brain about Waters' abduction that I wondered hadn't caught me before.

"How in time did you know Waters was at The Glade?" I demanded suddenly. "And suppose he hadn't walked out into your arms of his own accord the way he evidently did, how would you have got him?"

Auld stooped over and fussed a minute with what I took to be the lubricator before he answered.

"You're a persistent beggar, aren't you?" he said, as he straightened back in his seat. "Your first question goes with the rest of the story; that's all I'll say about that. As for the second, when we got there last night and located his room we found that there was some one in there talking to him. It was you, wasn't it?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Just so," said Auld. "We decided to wait until you had left him before making any move. Then, on some pretext or other, we would have enticed him outside. That, however, as you know, wasn't necessary. I expected to find it a harder task to get hold of you to-night."

"I guess you would at that," I agreed, "if they'd had their way with me back there. Why did——"

"I'd rather you didn't ask any more questions," he interrupted. "You see, I don't know how much you are in Mr. Waters' confidence to begin with, and, besides, it may not be all beer and skittles for us right here before we're through."

He was manœuvring the plane levers as he spoke. The atmosphere had suddenly chilled, and we seemed to be driving into a fleecy white mist.

"It looks as though we were running into a storm," he remarked, after a few minutes. "There's Ypsilanti."

I looked down as he pointed, but could only see a haze, yellow and murky, through the thickening mist.

"It's getting pretty thick," I ventured.

"Yes; I guess your sightseeing is over, though there wouldn't be much to see from here, anyway. We're slicing off the southern edge of Michigan. That just skips the bigger places—Jackson, north; Adrian, south; Coldwater, south—get it?"

"Yes," said I, and braced suddenly in my seat.

The *Eaglē* had taken a sharp downward dive; then, balancing herself, hung rocking from side to side. There came the heavy patter of rain on the cloths, and a flash of lightning cut the sky.

"We're liable to have this all the way now, unless we can get above it," Auld shouted. "Rotten bad sawbucks from the two lakes in here sometimes."

I watched the aërostat needle as it swung gradually upward, while the speed-meter pointer flickered tremulously around 135. Suddenly the *Eagle* began to plunge and pitch like a liner in an angry sea. The aërostat showed 1,500. Our speed was dropping fast, already down to 50, where it wavered unsteadily.

"Storm centre——" an ear-splitting crash of thunder drowned out Auld's words.

"Two storms meeting," he yelled again, as the thunder died away. "We're right between them. If we can win the upper level and catch the wind, we'll be over Lake Michigan before you can wink. Keep a firm seat, that's all; you're as safe as though you were in church."

The wind was whistling around us in a gale, seemingly coming from all

quarters at once. The rain was lashing us in stinging sheets.

Auld's voice rang out in an exultant cry: "Good old girl! We're through!"

I felt the aëroplane bound and leap forward under me. The pointer on the speed dial answered instantly. We had won to the upper level, and the gale, before in our teeth, was now behind us, driving us through space with terrific velocity. And, like a racer settling into the stride, the *Eagle*, with great outstretched pinions, sped forward straight as an arrow, trimming herself into stability as the side roll gradually lessened and died out entirely.

Around, below, above us was utter blackness like the blackness of the pit, save when angry forked tongues of flame tore zigzag courses through the heavens. The singing roar of the wind, the deafening peals of thunder were in our ears. All was madness—turmoil—delirium. It was as though the gates of Hidden Things had been thrown open and we were face to face with the Supernal. Once I glanced at the crouched figure beside me, motionless, tense, but in the pose was dominant power, resourcefulness.

The sense of majesty, awe, immensity was upon me; terror, too—the terror of that we do not understand and cannot probe. Like flinging sacrilegious defiance in the face of Heaven it seemed, to measure our puny strength with the battling elements around us.

A year, a minute, a second—I did not know. The sense of time was lost. Then I became conscious of a great stillness. Stars were twinkling above us; we were sailing earthward in a long swinging arc.

"Local," Auld was saying in matter-of-fact tones. "Central over Indiana and Ohio, I guess. Blew us a little south. We're pretty well across the lower end of Lake Michigan. There, to the right and a little behind—get it? We're about home. Ten minutes, if I've got my bearings right."

We dipped lower and lower. Auld slipped back a couple of notches on the controller, slowing down the speed. We were skimming the top of a forest.

"I thought you said Chicago," I muttered. I'll confess I was a bit shaken, and my voice sounded husky in my own ears.

"Oh, no; near it, I said," he replied. "Chicago's about sixty miles north. Here we are." He pointed to a single red light, that hung like a semaphore ahead. "Always have that showing at night when I'm out," he explained.

A clear space had opened before us. We dipped gently toward it, slipped by a few outbuildings, and alighted on a lawn, flooded by the soft light that streamed from the lower windows of a large house.

Auld let out a shout, and the next minute a figure was silhouetted in the doorway.

"That you, Billy?" roared a voice.

I never thought I'd live to call Waters' ungodly bellow musical; but that's the way it sounded then.

"Yes," I answered. "At least, I think so."

Auld pointed to the little clock in the hood. "Eleven twenty-eight. Take off those togs, and go on in. You've shared a record run," he declared jubilantly. "Do you get that?"

"Yes; I guess so," I muttered, pulling off the jacket and goggles. My legs were wobbly as I stood up. "Yes; I guess it's a record, or ought to be."

Waters clapped me on the shoulder as I stumbled up the steps to the veranda. "Well, Billy, how do you like working for me?" he cried.

"I thought you were a prisoner," I gasped.

"So I am, or was," he laughed. "Come inside and I'll introduce you to my jailer. Oh, by Jove! I guess you'll have to wait. There she is now."

A trim little figure in white was running across the lawn, a laughing voice floated up to us:

"Excuse me for a few moments, won't you, Mr. Waters? I always like to help Owen put the *Eagle* in the shed after a flight."

"Can't I help, too?" Waters called back, and I thought I caught a hint of eagerness in his tone.

"Oh, no; you must entertain your

friend. He mustn't think we are quite void of hospitality."

"Well, if it isn't the limit!" I exclaimed, as Waters led me inside and pushed me into a chair.

He grinned.

I glanced around the room. It was big, elegantly furnished, typical of the living room of a country mansion. There was evidence of wealth everywhere—from the Persian rug to the paper knife Waters had picked up from the table and was toying with.

Then I grinned, too. Same old story, same old way, the Eternal Feminine! I jerked my head toward the lawn. "You don't mean——"

"Don't be an ass, Billy," said Waters promptly. "That's Miss Morton, Auld's cousin. Colonel Swenton turned up, eh? We've been pretty closely in touch with The Glade through the wire with New York."

"Yes," I snapped. "He turned up. It's your business, not mine; but I wouldn't trust the cuss around the corner. He'd look more at home in a jail than anywhere else I can think of."

"Well," said Waters coolly, "that's where he will be by this time to-morrow."

"What!" I shouted. "Then the mine is a fake! I don't understand. How about your own engineer's report?"

"Oh, no," he replied. "The mine is real enough. In fact, I bought it this afternoon."

"I pass," said I helplessly.

Waters laughed. "Well, in a few words, it's like this," he explained. "Miss Morton is an orphan and lives here with her aunt, Mrs. Auld—who, by the way, always retires early, and begged me to make her excuses to you. She is a very charming old lady, Billy."

"I guess you've been having a better time than I have," I remarked. "Go on."

"Miss Morton is a Californian and very wealthy. This Colonel Swenton was pretty close to her father, so close, in fact, that when Mr. Morton died, the will made Swenton sole executor of the estate, understand? That was about two years ago. Since then he's been feeding on it like a locust, selling property, bonds, stocks, and pocketing the proceeds. Recently suspicions were aroused, a detective was put on the case and sent out there. As it generally happens, he dug things out just a little too late.

"By the time he'd got wise, proof-wise, to what had been going on, and incidentally discovered the deal the colonel was trying to put through with me—he got the latter, time, place, and all that from a copy of the telegram on file with the telegraph company that I had sent to Swenton making the final appointment—the colonel, with twelve hours' start, was on the way to close it up, see?

"The detective wired particulars to Miss Morton, stating that he was following on the next train with papers and proofs, and telling her, pending his arrival, to hold up the deal in some way that would not excite suspicion in Swenton's mind that he had been found out. You want to understand that, without proof of wrongdoing to show, Swenton, as executor, had a *legal right* to sell.

"Well, the detective's telegram was sent from California three days ago now, just as he boarded the train to come East himself. It arrived here all right, but Miss Morton and her aunt were away on a few days' visit to some friends, and Mr. Auld was also absent. They didn't get the telegram until their return yesterday. By that time Swenton, on the fastest train in the country, was between here and The Glade. There was one way to beat him to his destination, and Auld took it. That's all."

"Well," said I, "that part is all right, but I don't quite see the reason for abducting you and all the mysterious disappearance business."

"Why," replied Waters, "that's clear enough. Naturally, Auld knew that I had investigated the property as a matter of course, and the proofs to convince me that Swenton was up to crooked work were twelve hours away. The simplest way to convince me, and a rather neat way, too, Billy"—Waters

chuckled—"was to take me to see the proofs! And he didn't waste any words consulting me on the matter, either. You see, before going after me, he wired the detective on the train to get off at Chicago and come down here. Then again, with the hint of foul play, Swenton wouldn't connect my sudden and unexplainable disappearance in any way with himself. On the other hand, if Auld had succeeded in convincing me and I had remained, met Swenton, and refused to carry through the deal, his suspicions would have been aroused that his schemes were at last unearthed. I guess the hint would have been all he needed, with the result that when the detective arrived to close a little different kind of a game, Colonel Swenton's presence would have been but a memory."

"And as it is?" I asked. "What about it?"

"As it is, the detective came down here this afternoon, showed me the papers, and left for The Glade again this evening. By this time to-morrow, as I told you, our friend Swenton's little strayings from the path of virtue will be at an end."

"He's a sneaky little beast!" said I. "I suppose that's why you didn't or weren't permitted to let me know you were safe to-day—on account of him. I've had a be-eautiful time, but I guess I could have stood it until to-morrow. If it would all be cleared up then, it strikes me you went to a pile of trouble to get me out of it for one night."

"You're an ungrateful beggar," said Waters; "and I'm hanged if you deserved it. I almost wish I *had* let you hold down a cell in the Tombs."

"The Tombs!" I exclaimed.

"Exactly! They'd have taken you back to New York on suspicion, wouldn't they? Where do you suppose you'd have gone—the Waldorf?"

"Oh!" said I meekly.

Outside we could hear voices coming across the lawn.

"Here come Miss Morton and Auld now," said Waters. "Miss Morton is dying to hear all about what happened at The Glade to-day. There must have been something doing from the accounts we got over the wire from New York. Hey! What the devil are you looking so glum for?"

"Oh, nothing," said I. "I'm just aching for lady's society—look at my pants; and I'm positively crazy to talk—I haven't had a mouthful since ten o'clock this morning. There's nothing the matter—nothing at all!"

"By Jove!" grinned Waters. "I didn't notice before. You do look *soiled*. Never mind. Cheer up, Billy, supper is waiting. We'll hike up to my room before they come in, and I'll get Auld to fit you out with some clean things. Come on."

Emerson Hough's latest novel begins in the next "Popular," out two weeks hence, September 10th.

COLONEL ROOSEVELT'S BAD BOY

PRESIDENT TAFT had just heard of one of the innocent pranks of his younger son, Charlie.

"That reminds me of a good joke I had on Roosevelt when he was President and I was secretary of war," said Mr. Taft.

"I was walking up G Street one afternoon when an anxious mother stuck her head out of a neighboring second-story window and called shrilly to a little boy on the corner:

"'Johnny, if I catch you playing with that bad little Quentin Roosevelt, I'll give you the whipping of your life!'"

The Crew of the "Flash"

By Neil Montrose

Author of "Easy Money," "The Horseshoe," Etc.

If you want to know how it feels to slide down the slope of a sea in a motor boat, with the exhaust ripping the air like the crashing of a thousand automatic pistols, read this clever yarn

FAR out on the troubled bosom of Lake Erie a long dark thing pitched, and tossed, and wallowed. A little group of yachtsmen on shore watched it through glasses.

"He'll never make it!" cried Patten, skipper of the trim thirty-five-foot sloop *Edna*. "The seas are too much for him."

Crazily the thing wobbled shoreward, battling against the big waves. In a short time an intermittent popping was borne to the watchers on the squally wind; and at length the thing began to take definite shape. It was a motor boat, long, narrow of beam, and low of freeboard. From her bow a third of the way aft stretched a turtle back, or raised deck. Six short, stubby exhaust pipes protruded from this, showing the location of the motor.

"Five minutes more and he'll be inside," muttered Patten. The others were silent. In suspense they watched, so utterly fascinated with the spectacle of human beings battling with death, that not one of them thought of running out in a bigger boat and standing by. They were spellbound, breathless, quite incapable of action.

On came the motor boat, her exhaust ripping into the air like the crashing of a dozen automatic pistols. Now she was sliding down the slope of a sea; now lunging her pointed nose into the next one. Torrents of water swept over her, flying high in the air and pounding down upon the frail structure of the turtle back with crushing force. Sheets of spray leaped from the bows, making watery curtains along her sides.

One man bailed unceasingly, desperately, madly. They seemed certain of destruction, for the fight was so unequal. The angry lake was pitting its tons of power against a trifling work of man. And yet, somehow, the lake never quite won. Just as the motor boat was about to be engulfed, she would leap from the watery clutch and shake herself loose. Then she would bound a few yards nearer the smooth water in the landlocked bay.

"He'll make it!" cried Patten.

The little craft blared its exhaust yet louder, and smashed into the next wave at increased speed. The gap between death and safety closed a bit. It grew narrower—narrower—narrower. Then, with a last powerful spurt, the man-made thing plunged into the quiet water, amid cheers from the watchers. She soon slipped across the bay, and brought up alongside the yacht-club dock.

Two men, soaked to the skin, jumped out and made her fast. Crane, at the wheel, rubbed the water out of his eyes and grinned at the group ashore.

"I didn't expect to get here," he said, as he made his dripping way among them. "She won't ride the seas—she goes through 'em. It looked all the time as if she wanted to poke her nose into a wave and keep right on to the bottom."

"You ought to know better than to cruise in such a monstrosity," growled

Patten, still nervous from the tension. "If I had my way, I'd bar a boat like yours from the lake. Are you going to race her in this regatta?"

"Yes," replied Crane, "if I can get her pump gear fixed. That's why we were out on the lake all night and got caught in the heavy weather. Her lubricating system won't work, and the engine got hot and stalled. That kid ——" He leaned over and peered into the boat. "Better come out, Willie," he ordered.

Something wiggled from beneath the turtle back. It became a pair of legs, then the body, and shoulders, and head of a most disreputable-appearing boy about eighteen years old. He had been wallowing in the four or five inches of water that covered the cockpit floor, and there was much black grease on his face. He climbed out, and stood beside Crane.

"This is Willie Hall," he told Patten. "He's from the automobile factory that made our motor. Most of last night he was under that turtle back, working our disabled pump by hand. If we'd sunk, he couldn't have got out in time to swim for his life."

"By jingo, that's what I call a brave thing to do!" exclaimed some one in the group.

"Huh," mumbled Willie, "it wasn't nothin'. It was just stayin' in a uncomfortable place. I had as much chance as Mr. Crane or the others, for they couldn't have kept afloat in them seas. They was pretty big at times. And I was as well off as anybody, except that the oily water under there kept sloshin' in my face all the time and hissin' on the hot cylinders."

Patten surveyed the thirty-five feet of the boat's length and squinted under the turtle back. The big six-cylinder motor claimed so much of the space that even a small man was obliged to squeeze to get into the place.

"You prove yourself an incompetent judge of what constitutes bravery," he said to Willie. Then to Crane: "What do you call her?"

"The *Flash,*" was Crane's answer.

"What's her speed?"

"We've done better than twenty-eight an hour with her. Also we've done nothing an hour, for several hours at a stretch." There was a grieved note in Crane's voice. For this story dates to the early days of the motor boat, when mechanical equipments were not the perfection they now are. Crane shivered.

"Walk up to the hotel with me," he invited. "I've got to get some dry clothes somewhere; everything in the *Flash* is soaked." And as the two walked away Crane went into the boat's history.

"Haplin made her hull," he said, "and you know he's the best man on a speed hull in these parts. That part of my little ship is all right, but the motor——"

"Why don't you go back to sailing," interrupted Patten, "and throw that thing on the junk pile? You're not a real yachtsman——"

"Oh," wailed Crane, "don't begin on that line again! I've heard enough of it. And right now I have troubles enough with the *Flash's* motor. The automobile factory that made it hitched six single cylinders together and connected them to a common crankshaft. Now, Patten, one of those single-cylinder motors gives enough trouble to satisfy anybody. And when you multiply that trouble by six, you find yourself with a lot of it on your hands."

"I imagine so," said Patten.

"Sometimes," went on Crane, "the *Flash* starts with a rush that makes you think she's on her way around the world; then the first thing you know she's bobbing up and down on the swell, as still as an auctioneer on a vacation. She decided to stop last night as we were on our way here for the races. I tell you, Patten, I thought it was all up with us."

"You should give her up," Patten insisted, "and sail the yawl again. You know how everybody feels about these machine-driven boats."

But Crane would not listen. He laughed and broke away from his friend.

"I'll see you later," he cried, as he ran up the hotel steps. "I'm too wet for yacht shop talk, now." And he disappeared within the hostelry.

Patten had brought up a subject that had well-nigh rent yachting circles in twain and was still a fertile cause of argument. When the motor boat made its appearance yachtsmen everywhere became exceedingly wrathy whenever one came popping among them. Motor boating was not yachting, they contended. It required no especial skill. A motor was started, the boat forged ahead, and a man steered. There was no pointing up to the very centre of the wind, no judging the length of the tacks; in fact, there was no demand on the brain, that the best work might be forced from a craft. No, motor boating was not yachting. It was for mechanics, not sailors. So the sailboatmen viewed the growing popularity of the gas-driven arrangements with surly disfavor that amounted to positive hate, and looked upon deserters from their ranks as traitors.

Crane, with his speedy little *Flash,* had been among the first to secede from the canvas crowd. He was a fine, muscular fellow, tall, and well set up, and brown. The air and the sun had played havoc with the winter's office pallor. His fast boat was among the first of those built wholly for speed that the members of the Lake Erie Yachting Association had seen. The species of craft was too new to be common. And so, during the time he was in the hotel procuring dry raiment, the *Flash* attracted much attention.

Townsend, of the "one design" *Three Sisters,* together with a number of the amateur sailors from the other yachts in the harbor, gathered at the dock and gave utterance to the sentiment existing regarding Crane.

"He's a good sailor," said Townsend, "and he could handle the old *Centaur* with the best of 'em. I can't imagine why he wanted to take up with power boating. Why, those things are for harbor masters and fishermen!"

"Look at her beam!" scoffed Danny Bates, pointing to the *Flash.* "If a fly would light on her sta'board rail, she'd turn turtle."

"Speed's no use when it isn't practical," went on Townsend. "Speed for its own sake is just a form of dissipation; it's a gratification of the passion for rapid movement. If some one could invent an appliance for making a practical boat go twenty-eight miles an hour, that would be different. But I've no use for power in a boat—a jib and mains'l for mine."

And so they talked. No one had a kind word for the *Flash* or her owner. Unanimously the yachtsmen made game of the smart auto-yacht until her very name was a reproach. And out in the harbor the graceful white sailing boats nodded among themselves as if in silent approval of the abuse that was being heaped upon the intruder. The *Flash* was an outcast, a thing of shame, a yacht debauched.

Nor was this state of mind confined to a few. While Townsend and his cronies were discussing the despised *Flash,* Patten, and another man, and three girls approached.

"Oh!" cried one of them, as the little speeder came into view, "is *that* it?" There was a world of meaning in the emphasis on "that."

"Yes," Patten told her.

"Well," she said very positively, "I'm sure I don't care for it at all. It doesn't compare with your pretty boat, with its white sails and graceful lines, Mr. Patten."

"An engine in a box!" sneered the man.

The *Flash* had no friends. Patten took his group to the landing stage and rowed them out to his yacht. He might have saved himself work by installing a neat two-horse power in that tender; but even though the idea was being adopted at the time, he stubbornly preferred to row. It was ever thus with those who impede the wheels of progress.

He soon had sail on the *Edna* and was making a course that would take him "outside" into the open lake. The yacht was a staunch, fast sloop in which complete safety had been sacri-

ficed for lines that put her in the racing class. Crane and Willie Hall, who had returned from the hotel, watched her as she went away on a broad reach for the lake.

"She's a good boat," said Crane, "and Patten is a good sailor. Did you know, Willie, that these people don't like me because I am skipper of this speed affair?"

"Why not?" inquired the boy, who was a stranger to almost everything in yachting.

Crane explained.

"Well," commented Willie, "then all I've got to say is that they've never been in a boat that was going some. It's great, isn't it, Mr. Crane?"

Crane laughed. "I wouldn't have changed over if I hadn't gone crazy over the sensation," he said. "At the same time, Willie, I can't help thinking what I'm going to do when the *Flash* takes a notion to dive into a wave and not come up again."

He straightened and looked out through the harbor entrance at the *Edna*. She was on a northerly course now, out of which the wind was coming. The rollers through which she plowed were white-capped; and when she went into their hollows, only her sails were visible.

"There's still quite a sea on out there," Crane observed. "Patten ought to have left the girls ashore."

Willie had jumped into the *Flash* and was bailing.

"I ain't going to worry about anybody," he said. "No one worried about us when we were trying to get in this morning. Mr. Chalmers said that everybody just stood and stared."

Crane gave the boy a peculiar look.

"I won't believe that it meant anything but a lack of presence of mind," he said, "or perhaps they did not realize our danger—though they're all experienced sailors." He drew away from the subject. "How about our oil pump, Willie?"

"The pin sheared where the gear wheel was held on," explained the boy. "I knocked it off and turned the shaft with a pipe wrench. But I couldn't turn fast enough—that's why she kept heating so. We couldn't have kept up any high speed, and we can't now, only for a mile or so."

"What do you need to get her in condition?" asked Crane.

"Well," the boy said, "I'll have to drill out that old pin, if I can't knock it out, and then it's just a matter of putting in a new pin."

"Then you'd better——" Crane began, but suddenly he ceased. His eyes had been following the *Edna*. She had come about and had heeled so far over that her sails lay almost flat on the water. "*Thunder!*" he exclaimed.

Willie glanced up.

"Patten must be looking for trouble," said Crane. "He's taking chances out there. It's all right to sail like that when only men are aboard, but he has women with him." He stood staring out at the yacht until she righted and was on her way again. But he did not clamber down into his own boat.

Willie bailed and bailed, at last getting her clear of water. Then he started to crawl up under the turtle back, but he stopped as he heard Crane yell:

"Good heavens, she's gone over!"

She had, and Crane knew only too well the reason of it. A sudden squall had knocked her down—a quick, unannounced puff of wind for which the lake had an unenvied reputation. They come when they are least expected, and many a yacht has toppled over before them; and it is because of them that Lake Erie is known to all who sail her as treacherous.

The accident had been observed from the veranda of the hotel. Men came running down to the water front, crying out. Rowboats were being manned —frail affairs that could not live in the seaway outside.

Crane, taking in the situation with a hurried survey, saw the engineer of the *Dispatch*, a twin-screw power yacht, struggling madly to throw his engine over with a steel bar. Sail was going up on a dozen yachts. Help in plenty there surely was, but it was so slow—so despairingly slow! At least a quarter of an hour would elapse before the

fastest of the craft could reach the foundered yacht, a mile and a half out in the lake. And what might not happen in that time!

Crane shuddered as he thought of men and girls held under by tangled cordage, by sails; as he thought of her sinking and taking them with her. For a moment he was under that same spell which had held those who beheld him. Horror had brought with it inaction. Then of a sudden he came to himself.

"Willie," he cried, "will you risk it—will you turn the oiler?"

During the excitement the young fellow had climbed out on the dock and was gazing with the others ashore. For answer he leaped into the *Flash* and began to start the motor.

"Untie those lines!" Crane ordered in very unnautical terms, as the motor began to spit its exhaust into the air. The man obeyed and he leaped to his seat behind the wheel, just as Willie disappeared beneath the turtle back.

"It's dangerous, Willie," said Crane, as he threw the clutch that connected the propeller. "We may not come back."

"Go ahead," came a muffled voice from the cavelike place, "I'm game."

And Crane went ahead. As the speed increased he turned and pulled toward him, one by one, the half-dozen soggy life preservers in the cockpit. Then he faced forward again and opened up his throttle as wide as it would go.

The *Flash* leaped forward, hurtling through the still waters of the bay like a streak and shrilling a wild shriek from her exhaust. And as she approached the mouth of the harbor—beyond which she might find her doom in the heavy seas—Crane faintly heard a sound that made him smile grimly. The people ashore were cheering—the confirmed sail advocates were cheering a motor boat!

He leaned forward and called at the top of his voice:

"We're going into the rough water now, Willie. If anything happens, I'll drag you out of there or go down with you. Grab a life preserver as soon as you get out. Other boats will follow us and pick us up. Now, oil for all you're worth!"

"Thanks," said the boy in a voice that could scarcely be heard above the din of the exhaust.

The next instant the *Flash* hit a tremendous roller and paused, quivering with the shock of it. Her hull was very thin, intended only for quiet waters. Crane could distinctly feel the lurch forward of the heavy motor, as the velocity was checked. It might have wrenched itself free of the fastenings.

The nose of the *Flash* had divided the wave, and two walls of white water swept by on either side. Instinctively her pilot slowed down and glanced quickly behind him. The *Dispatch* had at last managed to start and was standing out of the harbor. Three of the yachts had sail up; one appeared to have got under way, but Crane could not be sure in the brief look. He was satisfied, though, that he was being backed by good sea boats of the fleet, and resolved to take every possible risk to get to the *Edna* in time to be of use.

He opened his throttle again and went at the next roller with his six exhaust tubes howling defiance. As it was about to crash against the *Flash*, he cut down his power. The wall of water broke more easily; the sudden cessation of the *Flash's* resistance had robbed it of much force. The motor boat did not wince under it; but a flood of water rushed along the turtle back and slopped into the cockpit. There were two ways of beating the fast little *Flash*: by crushing her or by sinking her.

Crane caught up a bailing can with one hand, and increased the power with the other, while he pressed his body against the wheel to hold the boat on her course. He bailed desperately, using both hands as soon as his throttle was open.

The next two waves were not as large as those he had come through, and, though making fast time, the *Flash* shipped very little water. Crane took advantage of this momentary lull

in the strenuousness to stand up and look for the *Edna*.

She was flat on the water, and he could not pick her up, because of the engulfing seas. But he had defined her position at the start, and had placed her in a line between the harbor entrance and an imaginary mark two points to port of the Turtle Island light. So he sailed a compass course, knowing that unless she had gone down he would be able to pick her up in another minute or two.

The *Flash* was doing her best—not her twenty-eight miles, for the heavy seaway prevented that—but high speed under the circumstances. She was diving, wobbling, struggling, her big engine sending her mercilessly at the might of the lake. Crane felt her bending and creaking under the strain, but he held her to her work. Into the waves, over them, through them she plunged. Then suddenly the pilot stiffened to attention. He turned an ear toward the exhaust tubes. The boat was slowing, and the irregular barking from the pipes told him that the motor was missing explosions. It would stop, and he would fail!

"Willie!" he yelled. Then his eyes swept across the tops of those six stubby stacks. Black vapor was coming from them. The mixture was too rich.

"Willie!" he screamed again. The boy slipped partly out of his prison.

"Give the mixture more air," shouted Crane.

Willie Hall crawled back again, and the skipper of the *Flash* knew that he had heard and that he would open the air valve of the carburettor, bit by bit, until the clumsy motor barked properly again. A few seconds later the explosions became more regular; then they resumed their accustomed long roll. Crane kicked Willie Hall's foot as a signal that the adjustment was properly made.

He speeded at the seas again, bailing with all his might. But in spite of it, the *Flash* was rapidly taking aboard more than her capacity of water. If only there was another man in the cockpit! He could at least keep them afloat. But Crane was practically alone. Willie was but a part of the machinery. He was the pump. Waiting until he was again in stiller water, Crane stood up for observations. Then he dropped to his wheel again, and twisted it slightly to starboard. He had made out the *Edna*, flat on the water and only a short distance away. And now, above the racket of the exhaust, he heard a hail:

"*Flash*, ahoy!"

It was Patten's voice. He, at least, was safe. In another moment the *Flash* slowly climbed a billow and the picture of the wreck was revealed in all its tragic details. The *Edna* was almost ready to go down. The air in her little cabin, the doors of which had been closed, had supported her until now. But the water had flowed into her and she would soon sink, with a whirlpool aftermath that would suck the five human beings down, down, down! If they did not become entangled in the rigging, they might come up again.

Crane sped his boat alongside the wreck. Patten lay across the hull, his legs in the water. On the other side were two of the girls, each holding one of Patten's hands. They made an inverted U, their bodies mostly in the water, their hands forming the top loop. The other man was similarly situated with the remaining girl.

Crane tossed all of his life preservers into the water.

"Use them if you have to," he ordered. Then he circled the *Edna*, and brought the *Flash* close to the side where hung the young women. Willie Hall had wiggled out of his hole and was standing by. He was holding the frail *Flash* away from the heavy hull of the wreck, for they were to windward, the mast and sails of her preventing a leeward approach.

"Now," shouted Crane, "let go of that girl on your right hand."

Patten did. The girl sank deep in the water, but Crane caught her and dragged her over the rail of the careening motor boat. She sank in a heap to the cockpit floor.

"Now the other," cried Crane. And

the process was repeated. He worked feverishly, madly, for the *Edna* was settling lower before his eyes. The remaining girl was hauled aboard, whereupon the two men clambered across the disappearing *Edna,* slipped into the water, and were helped into the *Flash's* cockpit. Immediately they fell to bailing, exhausted though they were, and Crane slipped in his clutch to get away from the *Edna's* dying throes that might trouble the water to the *Flash's* undoing.

At a safe distance he headed directly into the seas and slowed his motor to a speed whch would keep the *Flash* so pointed, but give her no headway to speak of.

At that moment Patten shouted:

"Look!"

He was pointing to where his trim little craft had been. Nothing remained there now save whirling eddies. The *Edna* had sunk. Patten looked away. He had been fond of that speedy sloop.

Then came a cry from one of the young women:

"Oh, they are coming for us!"

They were. The big *Dispatch* was lumbering heavily down upon them, riding the waves like a fat duck. Such a seaway meant nothing to her. She was seventy feet on the water line and had been brought inland from the Atlantic. Far behind her were the *Spray,* the *Meteor,* and the auxiliary yawl, *Witch.* There was plenty of help now. Rutherford, owner of the *Dispatch,* was on her linerlike bridge.

"*Flash,* ahoy!" he yelled through a megaphone. "All hands safe?"

Crane made a funnel of his palms.

"Yes; will you take them ashore?"

"Glad to," replied Rutherford, and ran his big cruiser past the *Flash,* getting to windward of her. The little speed boat nestled against her powerful sister as if glad of the protection. The water-soaked passengers of the unfortunate *Edna* clambered over her side, and a start was made for shore.

On the way in, the *Spray, Meteor,* and *Witch* were met. They put about and acted as escorts to the proud little *Flash.* Rutherford was digging into the *Dispatch's* signal book for an appropriate combination to hang from his mast. The people ashore were in suspense and would appreciate an "All's well" message. But the book had always puzzled him, he being a better piano maker than sailor.

"Thunderation!" he exclaimed, "I'll go mad over this thing some day! Fire the cannon, somebody. Fire it a lot. That'll tell 'em!"

The cook, having nothing to do, executed the order. He slipped many cartridges into the signal gun, and *bang! bang! bang!* it went, joyously proclaiming the good tidings. More yachts came out of the harbor, rushing along with rails awash, and they, too, fell in with the brave little motor boat's escort. It was a happy time for Crane. From the harbor's entrance he could see a great crowd on the dock; and as he looked he heard them cheer him—him, and Willie Hall, and the *Flash.* Gasoline was triumphant! There was some good in speed!

But there was more to come. After the shipwrecked passengers had been landed, a rush was made for Crane.

"Hooray for Crane!" whooped the crowd. A dozen big, bronzed yachtsmen in white duck swooped down upon him.

"Up with him!" they yelled. He felt himself being boosted to powerful shoulders.

"Hooray!" came the chorus. But Crane protested. Pointing to Willie Hall, he cried, struggling to get down:

"There's the boy who did it. Put him up and let me help!"

The captors considered. Then a bright one among them shouted:

"Up with both of 'em—carry 'em both. They deserve it!"

The next instant the astonished Willie was hoisted and a triumphal procession marched the crew of the *Flash* to the hotel.

Later Patten came to Crane.

"I've decided to get a gasoline cruiser. They're safer than the *Edna*—and besides, you don't need to worry about a calm."

"813"

BEING THE FURTHER EXPLOITS OF ARSÈNE LUPIN, ADVENTURER

By Maurice Leblanc

Author of "The Hollow Needle," Etc.

(TRANSLATED BY ALEXANDER TEIXEIRA DE MATTOS)

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MAP OF EUROPE.

PIERRE LEDUC loved Dolores! Lupin felt a keen, penetrating pain in the depths of his being, as though he had been wounded in the very source of life; a pain so great that, for the first time, he had a clear perception of what Dolores had become to him.

Pierre Leduc loved Dolores! And he was looking at her as a man looks at the woman he loves.

Lupin felt a murderous instinct rise up within him. That look, that look of love cast upon Dolores, that look maddened him. He received an impression of the great silence that enveloped Dolores and Pierre Leduc; and in this silence, in the stillness of their attitude there was nothing living but that look of love, that dumb and sensuous hymn in which the eyes told all the passion, all the desire, all the transport, all the yearning that one being can feel for another.

And he saw Mrs. Kesselbach also. Dolores' eyes were invisible under their lowered lids—the silky eyelids with the long, black lashes. But how she seemed to feel that look of love which sought for hers! How she quivered under that impalpable caress!

"She loves him—she loves him," thought Lupin, burning with jealousy.

And when Pierre made a movement, he muttered:

"Oh, the villain! If he dares to touch her, I will kill him!"

Then, realizing the defeat of his reason, and striving to combat it, he said to himself:

"What a fool I am! What, you, Lupin, letting yourself go like this! Look here, it's only natural that she should love him. Yes, of course, you expected her to show a certain emotion at your arrival. You silly idiot, you're only a thief, a robber, whereas he is a prince and young."

Pierre had not stirred further. But his lips were moving, and it seemed as if Dolores were waking. Softly, slowly, she raised her lids, turned her head a little, and her eyes met the young man's with the look which offers itself and which surrenders itself and which is more intense than the most intense of kisses.

What followed came suddenly and unexpectedly, like a thunderclap. In three bounds, Lupin rushed into the drawing room, sprang upon the young man, flung him to the ground, and, with one hand on his rival's chest, beside himself with anger, turning to Mrs. Kesselbach, he cried:

"But don't you know? Hasn't he told you, the cheat? And you love him, you love *that?* Does he look like a grand duke? Oh, what a joke!"

He sneered and chuckled like a madman, while Dolores gazed at him with stupor.

"He a grand duke! Hermann the Fourth, Grand Duke of Zweibrücken-Veldenz! A reigning sovereign! Elector of Treves! But it's enough to make one die laughing. He! Why, his name is Beaupré, Gérard Beaupré, the lowest of ragamuffins—a beggar, whom

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I picked up in the gutter! A grand duke? But it's I who made him a grand duke. Ha, ha, ha, what a joke! If you had seen him cut his little finger! He fainted three times—the milksop. Ah, you allow yourself to lift your eyes to ladies, and to rebel against the master! Wait a bit, Grand Duke of Zweibrücken-Veldenz!"

He took him in his arms, like a bundle, swung him to and fro for a moment, and pitched him through the open window.

"Mind the rose trees, grand duke! There are such things as thorns!"

When he turned round, Dolores was close to him and looking at him with the eyes of a woman who hates and who is incensed with rage. Could this possibly be Dolores; the weak, ailing Dolores?

She stammered:

"What are you doing? How dare you? And he—— Then it's true? He lied to me?"

"Lied to you?" cried Lupin, grasping the humiliation which she had suffered as a woman. "Lied to you? He, a grand duke! A puppet, that's all, a puppet of which I pulled the string; an instrument which I tuned, to play upon as I chose. Oh, the fool! Oh, the fool!"

Overcome with renewed rage, he stamped his foot, and shook his fist at the open window. And he began to walk up and down the room, flinging out phrases in which all the pent-up violence of his secret thoughts burst forth:

"The fool! Then he didn't see what I expected of him? He did not suspect the greatness of the part he was to play? Oh, I shall have to drive it into his noddle by force, I see! Lift up your head, you idiot! You shall be grand duke by the grace of Lupin! And a reigning sovereign! With a civil list! And subjects to fleece! And a palace which Charlemagne shall rebuild for you! And a master that shall be I, Lupin! Do you understand, you numskull? Lift up your head—no, higher than that! Look up at the sky, remember that a Zweibrücken was hanged for cattle stealing before the Hohenzollerns had ever been heard of. And you are a Zweibrücken, by Jove, no less; and I am here, I, I, Lupin! And you shall be grand duke, I tell you! A pasteboard grand duke? Very well! But a grand duke, all the same, quickened with my breath and glowing with my ardor. A puppet? Very well! But a puppet that shall speak *my* words and make *my* movements and perform *my* wishes and realize *my* dreams—yes, my dreams."

He stood motionless, as though dazzled by the glory of his conception. Then he went up to Dolores, and, sinking his voice with a sort of mystic exaltation, said:

"On my left, Alsace-Lorraine. On my right, Baden, Würtemberg, Bavaria, South Germany—all those disconnected, discontented states, crushed under the heel of the Prussian Charlemagne, but restless and ready to throw off the yoke at any moment. Do you understand all that a man like me can do in the midst of that, all the aspirations that he can arouse, all the hatred that he can produce, all the angry rebellion that he can inspire?"

In a still lower voice, he repeated:

"And, on my left, Alsace-Lorraine! Do you fully understand? Dreams? Not at all! It is the reality of the day after to-morrow, of to-morrow! Yes. I wish it. I wish it. Oh, all that I wish and all that I mean to do is unprecedented! Only think, at two steps from the Alsatian frontier! In the heart of German territory! Close to the old Rhine! A little intrigue, a little genius will be enough to change the surface of the earth. Genius I have, and to spare. And I shall be the master! I shall be the man who directs. The other, the puppet, can have the title and the honors. I shall have the power! I shall remain in the background. No office—I will not be a minister, nor even a chamberlain. Nothing. I shall be one of the servants in the palace, the gardener, perhaps. Yes, the gardener! Oh, what a tremendous life! To grow flowers—and to alter the map of Europe!"

She looked at him greedily, dominated, swayed by the strength of the man. And her eyes expressed an admiration which she did not seek to conceal.

He put his hands on Dolores' shoulders and said:

"That is my dream. Great as it is, it will be surpassed by the facts; that I swear to you. The kaiser has already seen what I am good for. One day he will find me installed in front of him, face to face. I hold all the trumps. Valenglay will act at my bidding; England also. The game is played and won. That is my dream. There is another one——"

He stopped suddenly. Dolores did not take her eyes from him, and an infinite emotion distorted her countenance.

A vast joy penetrated him as he once more felt, and clearly felt, that woman's confusion in his presence. He no longer had the sense of being to her what he was, a thief and a robber; he was a man, a man who loved, and whose love roused unspoken feelings in the depths of a friendly soul.

Then he said no more, but he told her, without uttering them, every word of fondness and admiration, and he thought of the life which they might lead somewhere, not far from Veldenz, unknown and all powerful.

A long silence united them. Then she rose and said softly:

"Go away, I entreat you to go. Pierre shall marry Geneviève, I promise you that, but it is better that you should go, that you should not be here. Go away, Pierre shall marry Geneviève."

He waited for a moment. Perhaps he would rather have had more definite words, but he dared not ask for anything. And he withdrew, dazed, intoxicated, and happy to obey, to subject his destiny to hers!

On his way to the door he came upon a low chair, which he had to move. But his foot knocked against something. He looked down. It was a little pocket mirror, in ebony, with a gold monogram.

Suddenly, he started and snatched up the mirror. The monogram consisted of two letters interlaced, an L and an M.

"Louis De Malreich," he said to himself, with a shudder.

He turned to Dolores.

"Where does this mirror come from? Whose is it? It is very important to——"

She took it from him and looked at it.

"I don't know—I never saw it before. A servant, perhaps."

"A servant, no doubt," he said, "but it is very odd. It is one of those coincidences——"

At that moment, Geneviève entered by the other door, and, without seeing Lupin, who was hidden by a screen, at once exclaimed:

"Why, that's your glass, Dolores! So you have found it, after making me hunt for it all this time! Where was it?" And the girl went away, saying: "Oh, well, I'm very glad it's found! How upset you were! I will go and tell them now to stop looking for it."

Lupin had not moved. He was confused, and tried in vain to understand. Why had Dolores not spoken the truth? Why had she not at once said whose the mirror was?

An idea flashed across his mind, and he asked, more or less at random:

"Do you know Louis De Malreich?"

"Yes," said Dolores, watching him, as though striving to guess the thoughts that beset him.

He rushed toward her, in a state of intense excitement.

"You know him! Who was he? Who is he? Who is he? And why did you not tell me? Where have you known him? Speak! Answer! I implore you."

"No," she said.

"But you must, you must. Think! Louis De Malreich! The murderer! The monster! Why did you not tell me?"

She, in her turn, placed her hands on Lupin's shoulders, and, in a firm voice, declared:

"Listen, you must never ask me, because I shall never tell. It is a secret

which I shall take with me to the grave. Come what may, no one will ever know, no one in the wide world, I swear it!"

He stood before her for some minutes anxiously, with a confused brain.

He remembered Steinweg's silence and the old man's terror when Lupin asked him to reveal the terrible secret. Dolores also knew, and she also refused to speak.

He went out without a word.

The open air, the sense of space, did him good. He wandered long over the country, soliloquizing aloud.

"What does it mean? What is happening? For months and months, fighting hard and acting, I have been pulling the strings of all the characters that are to help in the execution of my plans; and, during this time, I have completely forgotten to stoop over them and see what is going on in their hearts and in their brains. I do not know Pierre Leduc, I do not know Geneviève, I do not know Dolores. And I have treated them as jumping jacks, whereas they are live persons. And to-day I knock up against obstacles——"

He stamped his foot and cried:

"Against obstacles that do not exist! What do I care for the psychological state of Geneviève, of Pierre? I will study that later, at Veldenz, when I have secured their happiness. But Dolores—she knew Malreich, and said nothing! Why? What relations united them? Was she afraid of him? Is she afraid that he will escape from prison and come to revenge himself for an indiscretion on her part?"

At night, he went to the chalet which he had allotted to his own use at the end of the park, and dined in a very bad temper, storming at Octave, who waited on him either too slow or too fast.

"I'm sick of it," he cried. "Leave me alone. You're doing everything wrong to-day. And this coffee—it's not fit to drink."

He pushed back his cup half full, and for two hours walked about the park, sifting the same ideas over and over again. At last, one suggestion took definite shape within his mind:

"Malreich has escaped from prison. He is terrifying Mrs. Kesselbach. He has learned the story of the mirror from her."

Lupin shrugged his shoulders.

"And to-night he's coming to pull my leg, I suppose! I'm talking nonsense. The best thing I can do is to go to bed."

He went to his room, undressed, and went to bed. He fell asleep at once, with a heavy sleep, disturbed by nightmares. Twice he woke and tried to light his candle, and twice fell back, as though stunned by a blow.

Nevertheless, he heard the hours strike on the village clock, or rather, he thought that he heard them strike, for he was plunged in a sort of torpor, in which he seemed to retain all his wits.

And he was haunted by dreams—dreams of anguish and terror. He plainly heard the sound of his window opening. He plainly, through his closed eyelids, through the thick darkness, *saw* a form come toward the bed.

And the form bent over him.

He made the incredible effort needed to raise his eyelids and look—or, at least, he imagined that he did. Was he dreaming? Was he awake? He asked himself the question in despair.

A further sound——

He took up the box of matches by his bedside.

"Let's have a light on it," he said, with a great sense of elation.

He struck a match and lit the candle.

Lupin felt the perspiration streaming over his skin from head to foot, while his heart ceased beating, stopped with terror. The man was there.

Was it possible? No, no. And yet he *saw*—— Oh, the fearsome sight! The man, the monster was there!

"He shall not—he shall not," stammered Lupin madly.

The man, the monster was there, dressed in black, with a mask on his face, and with his felt hat pulled down over his false hair.

"Oh, I am dreaming—I am dream-

ing!" said Lupin, laughing. "It's a nightmare!"

Exerting all his strength and all his will power, he tried to make a movement, one movement, to drive away the vision.

He could not.

And, suddenly, he remembered—the coffee! The taste of it—similar to the taste of the coffee which he had drunk at Veldenz!

He gave a cry, made a last effort, and fell back exhausted. But, in his delirium, he felt that the man was unfastening the top button of his pajama jacket and baring his neck; felt that the man was raising his arm; saw that the hand was clutching the handle of a dagger—a little steel dagger similar to that which had struck Kesselbach, Chapman, Altenheim, and so many others.

A few hours later Lupin woke up, shattered with fatigue.

He lay for several minutes collecting his thoughts, and, suddenly remembering, made an instinctive defensive movement, as though he were being attacked.

"Fool that I am!" he cried, jumping out of bed. "It was a nightmare, a hallucination. It only needs a little reflection. Had it been *he*, had it really been a man in flesh and blood, who lifted his hand against me last night, he would have cut my throat like a rabbit's. *He* doesn't hesitate. Let's be logical. Why should he spare me? For the sake of my good looks? No, I have been dreaming, that's all."

He began to whistle, and dressed himself, assuming the greatest calmness, but his brain never ceased working, and his eyes sought about.

On the floor, on the window ledge, not a trace. As his room was on the ground floor, and as he slept with his window open, it was evident that his assailant would have entered that way.

Well, he discovered nothing; and there was nothing either at the foot of the wall outside or on the gravel of the path that ran round the chalet.

"Still—still——" he repeated, between his teeth.

He called Octave.

"Where did you make the coffee which you gave me last night?" he asked.

"At the castle, governor, like the rest of the things. There is no range here."

"Did you drink any of it?"

"No."

"Did you throw away what was left in the coffeepot?"

"Why, yes, governor. You said it was so bad. You only took a few mouthfuls."

"Very well. Get the motor ready. We're leaving."

Lupin was not the man to remain in doubt. He wanted to have a decisive explanation with Dolores. But, for this, he must first clear up certain points that seemed to him obscure, and see Jean Doudeville, who had sent him some rather curious information from Veldenz.

He drove, without stopping, to the grand duchy, which he reached at two o'clock. He had an interview with Count Von Waldemar, whom he asked, upon some pretext, to delay the journey of the delegates of the Regency to Bruggen. Then he went in search of Doudeville in a tavern at Veldenz.

Doudeville took him to another tavern, where he introduced him to a shabbily dressed little gentleman, Herr Stockli, a clerk in the department of births, deaths, and marriages. They had a long conversation. They went out together, and all three passed stealthily through the offices of the town hall. At seven o'clock Lupin dined and set out again. At ten o'clock he arrived at Bruggen Castle, and asked for Geneviève, so that she might take him to Mrs. Kesselbach's room.

He was told that Mademoiselle Ernemont had been called back to Paris by a telegram from her grandmother.

"Ah!" he said. "But can I see Mrs. Kesselbach?"

"Mrs. Kesselbach went straight to bed after dinner. She is sure to be asleep."

"No, I saw a light in her boudoir. She will see me."

He did not wait for Mrs. Kesselbach to send out an answer. He walked into the boudoir almost upon the servant's heels, dismissed her, and said to Dolores:

"I have to speak to you, madame, on an urgent matter. Forgive me. I confess that my behavior must seem importunate, but you will understand, I am sure."

He was greatly excited, and did not seem much disposed to put off the explanation, especially as, before entering the room, he thought he heard a sound.

However, Dolores was alone and lying down. And she said, in her tired voice:

"Perhaps we might have—to-morrow——"

He did not answer, suddenly struck by a smell that surprised him in that boudoir—a smell of tobacco. And, at once, he had the intuition, the certainty, that there was a man there, at the moment when he himself arrived, and that perhaps the man was there still, hidden somewhere.

Pierre Leduc? No, Pierre Leduc did not smoke. Then who?

Dolores murmured:

"Be quick, please."

"Yes, yes, but first, would it be possible for you to tell me——"

He interrupted himself. What was the use of asking her? If there was really a man in hiding, would she be likely to tell?

Then he made up his mind, and, trying to overcome the sort of timid constraint that oppressed him at the sense of a strange presence, said in a very low voice, so that Dolores alone should hear:

"Listen. I have learned something which I do not understand and which perplexes me greatly. You will answer me, will you not, Dolores?"

He spoke her name with great gentleness and as though he were trying to master her by the note of love and affection in his voice.

"What have you learned?" she asked.

"The register of births at Veldenz contains three names which are those of the last descendants of the family of Malreich, which settled in Germany."

"Yes, you have told me all that."

"You remember, the first name is Raoul De Malreich, better known under his alias of Altenheim, the scoundrel, the swell hooligan, now dead—murdered."

"Yes."

"Next comes Louis De Malreich, the monster, the terrible murderer who will be beheaded in a few days from now."

"Yes."

"Then, lastly, Isilda, the mad daughter."

"Yes."

"So all that is quite settled, is it not?"

"Yes."

"Well," said Lupin, leaning over her, "I have just made an investigation which showed me that the second of the three Christian names—or rather, a part of the line on which it is written—has at some time or other been subjected to a process of erasure. The line is written over, in a new hand, with much fresher ink; but the writing below is not quite effaced, so that——"

"So that——" asked Mrs. Kesselbach, in a low voice.

"So that, with a good lens and particularly with the special methods which I have at my disposal, I was able to revive some of the obliterated syllables, and, without any possibility of a mistake, in all certainty to reconstruct the old writing. I then found—not Louis De Malreich, but——"

"Oh, don't, don't!"

Suddenly shattered by the strain of her prolonged effort of resistance, she lay bent double, and, with her head in her hands, her shoulders shaken with convulsive sobs, she wept.

Lupin looked for long seconds at this weak and listless creature, so pitifully helpless. And he would have liked to stop, to cease the torturing questions which he was inflicting upon her. But was it not to save her that he was acting as he did? And, to save

her, was it not necessary that he should know the truth, however painful?

He resumed:

"Why that forgery?"

"It was my husband," she stammered; "it was my husband who did it. With his fortune, he could do everything, and he bribed an under clerk to have the Christian name of the second child altered for him on the register."

"The Christian name and the sex?" said Lupin.

"Yes," she said.

"Then," he continued, "I am not mistaken. The original Christian name, the real one, was Dolores?"

"Yes."

"But why did your husband——"

She whispered in a shamefaced manner, while the tears streamed down her cheeks:

"Don't you understand?"

"No."

"But think!" she said, shuddering. "I was the sister of Isilda, the madwoman, the sister of Altenheim, the ruffian. My husband—or rather, my affianced husband—would not have me remain that. He loved me. I loved him, too, and I consented. He suppressed Dolores De Malreich on the register, he bought me other papers, another personality, another birth certificate; and I was married at the Cape in another girl's name, as Dolores Amonti."

Lupin reflected for a moment, and said thoughtfully:

"Yes, yes. I understand. Then Louis De Malreich does not exist; and the murderer of your husband, the murderer of your brother and sister, does not bear that name—*his* name."

She sprang to a sitting posture.

"His name!" she cried eagerly. "Yes, that is his name—Louis De Malreich—L. M. Oh, do not try to find out; it is the terrible secret. Besides, what does it matter? They have the criminal. He is the criminal. I tell you he is. Did he defend himself when I accused him, face to face? Could he defend himself, under that name or any other? It is he, it is he. He committed the murders. He struck the blows. The dagger—the steel dagger—— Oh, if I could only tell all I know! Louis De Malreich! If I could only——"

She fell back on the sofa in a fit of hysterical sobbing. Her hand clutched Lupin's, and he heard her stammering, amid inarticulate words:

"Protect me—protect me. You alone, perhaps. Oh, do not forsake me. I am so unhappy! Oh, what torture! What torture! It is hell!"

With his free hand, he stroked her hair and forehead with infinite gentleness; and, under his caress, she gradually relaxed her tense nerves and became calmer.

Then he looked at her again, and asked himself what there could be behind that fair white brow, what secret was ravaging that mysterious soul. She also was afraid. But of whom? Against whom was she imploring him to protect her?

Once again he was obsessed by the image of the man in black, by that Louis De Malreich, the sinister and incomprehensible enemy, whose attacks he had to ward off without knowing whence they came.

He was in prison, watched day and night—— Tush! Did Lupin not know by his own experience that there are beings for whom prison does not exist and who throw off their chains at the given moment? And Louis De Malreich was one of them.

Yes, there was some one in the Santé prison, in the condemned man's cell. But it might be an accomplice or some victim of Malreich, while Malreich himself prowled around Bruggen Castle, slipped in under cover of the darkness, like an invisible specter, made his way into the chalet in the park, and, at night, raised his dagger against Lupin asleep and helpless.

And it was Louis De Malreich who terrorized Dolores, who drove her mad with his threats, who held her by some dreadful secret, and forced her into silence and submission.

And Lupin imagined the enemy's plan: To throw Dolores, scared and trembling, into Pierre Leduc's arms, to

make away with him, Lupin, and to reign in his place, over there, with the grand duke's power and Dolores' millions.

It was a likely supposition, a certain supposition, which fitted in with the facts and provided a solution for all the problems.

"For all?" thought Lupin. "Yes. But why did he not kill me, last night, in the chalet? He had but to wish to, *and he did not wish to.* One movement, and I was dead! He did not make that movement. Why?"

Dolores opened her eyes, saw him, and smiled, with a pale smile.

"Leave me," she said.

He rose, with some hesitation. Should he go and see if the enemy was behind a curtain or hidden behind the dresses in a closet?

She repeated gently:

"Go. I want to sleep."

He went away.

But, outside, he stopped behind some trees that formed a dark cluster in front of the castle. He saw a light in Dolores' boudoir. Then the light passed into the bedroom. In a few minutes, all was darkness.

He waited. If the enemy was there, perhaps he would come out of the castle.

An hour elapsed, two hours. Not a sound.

"There is nothing to be done," thought Lupin. "Either he is burrowing in some corner of the castle or else he has gone out by a door which I cannot see from here. Unless the whole thing is the most ridiculous supposition on my part——"

He lit a cigarette and walked back to the chalet.

As he approached it, he saw, at some distance from him, a shadow which appeared to be moving away.

He did not stir, for fear of giving the alarm.

The shadow crossed a path. By the light of the moon, he seemed to recognize the black figure of Malreich.

He rushed forward.

The shadow fled and vanished from sight.

Lupin roused Octave, his chauffeur, and directed:

"Take the motor and go to Paris. You will be there by six o'clock in the morning. See Jacques Doudeville and tell him two things: First, to give me news of the man under sentence of death; and, secondly, as soon as the post offices open, to send me a telegram which I will write."

He worded the telegram on a scrap of paper, and added:

"The moment you have done that, come back, but this way, along the wall of the park. Go now. No one must suspect your absence."

Lupin went to his own room, pressed the spring of his lantern, and began to make a minute inspection.

"It's as I thought," he said presently. "Some one came here to-night while I was watching beneath the window. And, if he came, I know what he came for! Things are getting warm. The first time I was spared. This time, I may be sure of my little stab."

For caution's sake, he took a blanket, chose a lonely spot in the park, and spent the night under the stars.

Octave was back by ten o'clock in the morning.

"It's all right, governor. The telegram has been sent."

"Good. And is Louis De Malreich still in prison?"

"Yes. Doudeville passed his cell at the Santé last night, as the warder was coming out. They talked together. Malreich is just the same, it appears—silent as the grave. He is waiting."

"What for?"

"The fatal hour, of course. They say, at the headquarters of police, that the execution will take place on the day after to-morrow."

"That's all right, that's all right," said Lupin. "And one thing is quite plain: He has not escaped."

He ceased to look for the explanation of the riddle, so clearly did he feel that the whole truth would soon be revealed to him. He had only to prepare his plan, for the enemy to fall into the trap.

"Or for me to fall into it myself!" he thought, laughing.

He felt very gay, very free from care; and no fight had ever looked more promising to him.

A footman came from the castle with the telegram which he had told Doudeville to send him, and which a messenger had just brought. He opened it, and put it in his pocket.

A little before twelve o'clock, he met Pierre Leduc in one of the avenues, and said, offhand:

"I am looking for you. Things are serious. You must answer me frankly. Since you have been at the castle, have you ever seen a man there, besides the two German servants whom I sent in?"

"No."

"Think carefully. I'm not referring to a casual visitor. I mean a man who hides himself, a man whose presence you might have discovered, or whose presence you might have suspected from some clue or even by some intuition?"

"No. Have you?"

"Yes. Some one is hiding here; some one is prowling about. Who is it? And what is his object? I don't know—but I shall know. I already have a suspicion. Do you, on your side, keep your eyes open and watch. And, above all, not a word to Mrs. Kesselbach. It is no use alarming her."

Pierre Leduc, taken aback and upset, went back to the castle. On his way, he saw a piece of blue paper on the edge of the lawn. He picked it up. It was a telegram, not crumpled, like a piece of paper that had been thrown away, but carefully folded—obviously lost.

It was addressed to "Mauny," the name by which Lupin was known at Bruggen. And it contained these words:

> We know the whole truth. Revelations impossible by letter. Will take train to-night. Meet me eight o'clock to-morrow morning Bruggen station.

"Excellent!" said Lupin, who was watching Pierre Leduc's movements from a neighboring coppice. "Excellent! In two minutes from now, the young idiot will have shown Dolores the telegram and told her all my fears. They will talk about it all day. And 'the other one' will hear; 'the other one' will know—because he knows everything, because he lives in Dolores' own shadow, and because Dolores is like a fascinated prey in his hands. And, to-night?"

He walked away, humming to himself:

"To-night! To-night we shall dance—such a waltz, my boys! The waltz of blood, to the tune of the little nickel-plated dagger! We shall have some fun, at last!"

He reached the chalet, called Octave, went to his room, and said to the chauffeur:

"Sit down in that chair, Octave, and keep awake. Your master is going to take forty winks. Watch over him, you faithful servant."

He had a good sleep.

"Like Napoleon on the morning of Austerlitz," he said, when he woke up.

It was dinner time. He made a hearty meal, and then, while he smoked a cigarette, inspected his weapons, and renewed the charges of his two revolvers.

"'Keep your powder dry and your sword sharpened,' as my chum, the kaiser says. Octave!"

Octave appeared.

"Go and have your dinner at the castle, with the servants. Tell them you are going to Paris to-night, in the motor."

"With you, governor?"

"No, alone. And, as soon as dinner is over, make a start, ostensibly."

"But I am not to go to Paris?"

"No. Remain outside the park, half a mile down the road, until I come. You will have a long wait."

He smoked another cigarette, went for a stroll, passed in front of the castle, saw a light in Dolores' rooms, and then returned to the chalet.

He took a book and read. At half-past eleven, he went to his bedroom. He left the window half open and put his revolvers under his pillow. Then, peacefully, without evincing the least

excitement, he got into bed, fully dressed as he was, and blew out the candle.

And his fear began.

It was immediate. No sooner did he feel the darkness around him than his fear began!

"Confound it all!" he cried.

He jumped out of bed, took his weapons, and threw them into the passage.

"My hands, my hands alone, as with the Altenheim gang! There were seven of those chaps!" And he reflected: "Yes, but this one is worth more than the whole gang put together. No matter," he continued, aloud, "let him come! Lupin is ready for him."

He went to bed again. Darkness and silence, once more. And, once more, his fear!

The village clock struck twelve.

Lupin thought of the foul monster who, outside, at a hundred yards, at fifty yards from where he lay, was trying the sharp point of his dagger.

"Let him come, let him come!" whispered Lupin, shuddering. "Then the ghosts will vanish."

One o'clock in the village.

And minutes passed, endless minutes, minutes of fever and anguish.

Two o'clock.

And now, somewhere, quite close, a hardly perceptible sound stirred, a sound of leaves pushed aside.

As Lupin had foreseen, he was at once pervaded by an immense calm. All his adventurous being quivered with delight. The struggle was at hand, at last!

Another sound grated under the window, more plainly this time, but still so faint that it needed Lupin's trained ear to distinguish it.

Minutes, terrifying minutes! The darkness was impenetrable. No light of star or moon relieved it.

And, suddenly, without hearing anything, he *knew* that the man was in the room.

And the man walked toward the bed. He walked as a ghost walks, without displacing the air of the room, without shaking the objects which he touched.

But, with all his instinct, with all his nervous force, Lupin saw the movements of the enemy and guessed the very sequence of his ideas.

He himself did not budge, but remained propped against the wall, almost on his knees, ready to spring.

He felt that the figure was touching, feeling the bedclothes, to find the spot at which it must strike. Lupin heard its breath. He even thought that he heard the beating of its heart. And he noticed with pride that his own heart beat no louder than before, whereas the heart of "the other"—oh, yes, he could hear it now, that disordered, mad heart, knocking, like the clapper of a bell, against the cavity of the chest.

The hand of "the other" rose.

A second, two seconds.

Was he hesitating? Was he once more going to spare his adversary?

And Lupin, in the great silence, said:

"Strike! Why don't you strike?"

A yell of rage. The arm fell, as though moved by a spring.

Then came a moan.

Lupin had caught the arm in mid-air, at the level of the wrist. And, leaping out of bed, tremendous, irresistible, he clutched the man by the throat and threw him down.

That was all. There was no struggle. There was no possibility of a struggle. The man lay on the floor, nailed, pinned by two steel rivets, Lupin's hands. And there was not a man in the world strong enough to release himself from that grip.

And not a word. Lupin uttered none of those phrases in which his mocking humor usually delighted. He had no inclination to speak. The moment was too solemn.

He felt no vain glee, no victorious exaltation. In reality, he had but one longing, to know who was there: Louis De Malreich, the man sentenced to death, or another? Which was it?

At the risk of strangling the man, he squeezed the throat a little more—and a little more—and a little more still.

And he felt that all the enemy's strength, all the strength that remained to him, was leaving him. The muscles of the arm relaxed and became lifeless. The hand opened and dropped the dagger.

Then, free to move as he pleased, with his adversary's life hanging in the terrible grip of his fingers, he took his pocket lantern with one hand, laid his finger on the spring, without pressing, and brought it close to the man's face.

He had only to press the spring, to wish to know, and he would know.

For a second he enjoyed his power. A flood of emotion upheaved him. The vision of his triumph dazzled him. Once again, superbly, heroically, he was the master.

He switched on the light. The face of the monster came into view.

Lupin gave a shriek of terror.

Dolores Kesselbach!

CHAPTER XVII.

ARSENE LUPIN'S THREE MURDERS.

A cyclone passed through Lupin's brain, a storm in which roars of thunder, gusts of wind, squalls of all the distraught elements were tumultuously unchained in the chaotic night.

And great flashes of lightning shot through the darkness. And, by the dazzling gleam of those lightning flashes, Lupin, scared, shaken with thrills, convulsed with horror, saw, and tried to understand.

He did not move, clinging to the enemy's throat, as if his stiffened fingers were no longer able to release their grip. Besides, although he now *knew,* he had not, so to speak, the exact feeling that it was Dolores. It was still the man in black, Louis De Malreich, the foul brute of the darkness; and that brute he held and did not mean to let go.

But the truth rushed upon the attack of his mind and of his consciousness; and, conquered, tortured with anguish, he muttered:

"Oh, Dolores! Dolores!"

He at once saw the excuse: it was madness. Dolores was mad. The sister of Altenheim and Isilda, the daughter of the last of the Malreichs, of the demented mother, of the drunken father, was herself mad. A strange madwoman, mad with every appearance of sanity, but mad nevertheless, unbalanced, brain sick, unnatural, truly monstrous.

That he most certainly understood! It was homicidal madness. Under the obsession of an object toward which she was drawn automatically, she killed, thirsting for blood, not knowing what she did infernally.

She killed because she wanted something, she killed in self-defense, she killed because she had killed before. But she killed also and especially for the sake of killing. Murder satisfied sudden and irresistible appetites that arose in her. At certain seconds in her life, in certain circumstances, face to face with this or that being who had suddenly become the foe, her arm had to strike.

And she struck, drunk with rage, ferociously, frenziedly.

A strange madwoman, not answerable for her murders, and yet so lucid in her blindness, so logical in her mental derangement, so intelligent in her absurdity! What skill, what perseverance, what cunning contrivances, at once abominable and admirable!

And Lupin, in a rapid view, with prodigious keenness of outlook, saw the long array of bloodthirsty adventures and guessed the mysterious paths which Dolores had pursued.

He saw her obsessed and possessed by her husband's scheme—a scheme which she evidently understood only in part. He saw her also looking for that Pierre Leduc whom her husband was seeking, looking for him in order to marry him and to return, as queen, to that little realm of Veldenz from which her parents had been ignominiously driven.

And he saw her at the Palace Hotel, in the room of her brother, Altenheim, at the time when she was supposed to be at Monte Carlo. He saw her, for days together, spying upon her husband, creeping along the walls, one

with the darkness, undistinguishable and unseen in her black disguise.

And, one night, she found Mr. Kesselbach fastened up—and she stabbed him.

And, in the morning, when on the point of being denounced by the floor waiter—she stabbed him.

And, an hour later, when on the point of being denounced by Chapman, the secretary, she dragged him to her brother's room—and stabbed him.

All this pitilessly, savagely, with diabolical skill.

And with the same skill she communicated, by telephone, with her two maids, Gertrude and Suzanne, both of whom had arrived from Monte Carlo, where one of them had enacted the part of her own mistress. And Dolores, resuming her feminine attire, went down to the ground floor, joined Gertrude at the moment when the maid entered the hotel, and pretended to have just arrived, all ignorant of the tragedy that awaited her.

An incomparable actress, she played the part of the wife whose existence is shattered for good and all. Every one pitied her. Every one wept for her. Who could have suspected her?

Then came the war with him, Lupin, that unparalleled contest which she waged, by turns, against Monsieur Lenormand and Prince Sernine, spending her days stretched on her sofa, ill and fainting, but her nights on foot, scouring the roads, indefatigable and terrible.

And the diabolical contrivances: Gertrude and Suzanne, frightened and subdued accomplices, both of them serving her as emissaries, disguising themselves to represent her, when the occasion required.

And the series of murders: Gourel drowned; Altenheim, her brother, stabbed. Oh, the implacable struggle in the underground passages of the Villa des Glycines, the invisible work performed by the monster in the dark; how clear it all appeared to-day!

And it was she who tore off his mask as Prince Sernine, she who betrayed him to the police, she who sent him to prison, she who thwarted all his plans, spending her millions to win the battle.

And then events followed faster: Suzanne and Gertrude disappeared, dead, no doubt! Steinweg, assassinated! Isilda, the sister, assassinated!

"Oh, the ignominy, the horror of it!" stammered Lupin, with a start of revulsion and hatred.

He execrated her, the abominable creature. He would have liked to crush her, to destroy her. And it was a stupefying sight, those two beings, clinging to each other, lying motionless in the pale dawn that began to mingle with the shades of the night.

"Dolores! Dolores!" he muttered, in despair.

He leaped back, terror-stricken, wild-eyed. What was it? What was that? What was that hideous feeling of cold which froze his hands?

"Octave! Octave!" he shouted, forgetting that the chauffeur was not there.

Help—he needed help—some one to reassure him and assist him. He shivered with fright. Oh, that coldness, that coldness of death which he had felt! Was it possible? Then, during those few tragic minutes, with his clenched fingers, he had——

Violently, he forced himself to look. Dolores did not stir.

He flung himself on his knees and drew her to him.

Dolores was dead.

He remained for some seconds a prey to a sort of numbness in which his grief seemed to be swallowed up. He no longer suffered. He no longer felt rage, nor hatred, nor emotion of any kind—nothing but a stupid prostration, the sensation of a man who has received a blow with a club and who does not know if he is still alive, if he is thinking, or if he is the sport of a nightmare.

Nevertheless, it seemed to him that an act of justice had taken place; and it did not for a second occur to him that it was he who had taken life. No, it was not he. It was outside him and his will. It was destiny—inflexible

destiny—that had accomplished the work of equity by slaying the noxious beast.

Outside, the birds were singing. Life was recommencing under the old trees, which the spring was preparing to bring into bud. And Lupin, waking from his torpor, felt gradually welling up within him an indefinable and ridiculous compassion for the wretched woman—odious, certainly, abject and twenty times criminal, but so young still, and now—dead.

And he thought of the tortures which she must have undergone in her lucid moments, when reason returned to the unspeakable madwoman and brought the sinister vision of her deeds.

"Protect me. I am so unhappy!" she used to beg.

It was against herself that she asked to be protected, against her wild-beast instincts, against the monster that dwelt within her and forced her to kill, always to kill.

"Always?" said Lupin to himself.

And he remembered the night, two days since, when, standing over him, with her dagger raised against the enemy who had been harassing her for months, against the enemy who had run her to earth after each of her crimes, he remembered that, on that night, she had not killed. And yet it would have been easy, for the enemy lay lifeless and powerless. One blow, and the implacable struggle was over. No, she had not killed; she, too, had given way to feelings stronger than her own cruelty, to mysterious feelings of pity, of sympathy, of admiration for the man who had so often mastered her.

The daylight found Lupin seated beside the dead woman, and remembering——

He closed her eyes and covered the poor, distorted face.

He must act, however. He began by leaning over her and feeling in the dark clothes. In an inside pocket were two pocketbooks. He found one of them and opened it. He found a letter signed by Steinweg, the old German. It contained the following lines:

Should I die before being able to reveal the terrible secret, let it be known that the murderer of my friend Kesselbach is his wife, whose real name is Dolores De Malreich, sister to Altenheim, and sister to Isilda.

The initials L and M relate to her. Kesselbach never, in their private life, called his wife Dolores, which is a name of sorrow, but Letitia, which denotes joy. L. M.—Letitia De Malreich—were the initials inscribed on all the presents which he used to give her—for instance, on the cigarette case which was found at the Palace Hotel and which belonged to Mrs. Kesselbach. She had contracted the smoking habit on her travels.

Letitia! She was indeed the joy of his life for four years—four years of lies and hypocrisy, in which she prepared the death of the man who loved her so well, and who trusted her so whole-heartedly.

Perhaps I ought to have spoken at once. I had not the courage, in memory of my old friend Kesselbach, whose name she bore.

And then I was afraid. On the day when I met her at the Palais de Justice, I read my doom in her eyes.

Will my weakness be the means of saving me?

"Him, also," thought Lupin; "him, also, she killed. And, of course, he knew too much—the initials; that name, Letitia; the secret habit of smoking."

And he remembered the previous night, that smell of tobacco in her room.

He continued his inspection of the first pocketbook. There were scraps of letters, in cipher, no doubt handed to Dolores by her accomplices, in the course of their nocturnal meetings. There were also addresses on bits of paper, addresses of milliners and dressmakers, but addresses also of low haunts, of common hotels. And names, twenty, thirty names, queer names: Hector the Butcher, Armand, of Grenelle, the Sick Man.

But a photograph caught Lupin's eye. He looked at it. And, at once, as though shot from a spring, dropping the pocketbook, he bolted out of the room, out of the chalet, and rushed into the park.

He had recognized the portrait of Louis De Malreich, the prisoner at the Santé!

Not till then, not till that exact moment did he remember. The execution was to take place next day!

And, as the man in black—the murderer—was none other than Dolores Kesselbach, Louis De Malreich's name was really and truly Léon Massier, and he was innocent.

Innocent? But the evidence found in his house—the emperor's letters and all the things that accused him beyond hope of denial—all those incontrovertible proofs?

Lupin stopped for a second, with his brain on fire.

"Oh," he cried, "I shall go mad—I, too! Come, though, I must act. The sentence is to be executed to-morrow—to-morrow—to-morrow at break of day."

He looked at his watch.

"Ten o'clock! I shall be in Paris this afternoon, and I shall prevent—— But how? How can I prove his innocence? How prevent the execution? Oh, never mind! I shall find a way."

He set off again at a run, entered the castle, and called out:

"Pierre! Pierre! Oh, there you are. Listen."

He took him on one side and jerked out, in imperious tones:

"Listen. Dolores is not here. Yes, she was called away on urgent business; she left last night in my motor. I am going, too. Don't interrupt, not a word! A second lost means irreparable harm. Send away all the servants, without any explanation. Here is money. In half an hour from now, the castle must be empty. And let no one enter it until I return. Not you, either. Take the key with you. Wait for me in the village."

Five minutes later he was with Octave. He jumped into the car:

"Paris!"

The journey was a real race for life or death. Lupin, thinking that Octave was not driving fast enough, took the steering wheel himself, and drove at a disorderly, breakneck speed. On the road, through the villages, along the crowded streets of the towns they rushed at sixty miles an hour. People whom they nearly upset roared and yelled with rage, but the meteor was far away, was out of sight.

"G-governor," stammered Octave, livid with dismay, "we shall be stuck!"

"You, perhaps, the motor, perhaps; but I shall arrive!" said Lupin.

He thought of the man who would die if he did not arrive in time to save him; of the mysterious Louis De Malreich, so disconcerting with his stubborn silence and his expressionless face.

And, amid the roar of the road, under the trees whose branches made a noise as of furious waves, amid the buzzing of his thoughts, Lupin strove to set up hypothesis. And this hypothesis became gradually more defined, logical, probable, certain, he said to himself, now that he knew the hideous truth about Dolores and saw all the resources and all the odious designs of that crazy mind.

"Yes, it was she who contrived the most terrible plots against Malreich," he mused. "What was it she wanted? To marry Pierre Leduc, and to become the sovereign of the little principality from which she had been banished. The object was attainable, within reach of her hand. There was one sole obstacle—I, Lupin, who, for weeks and weeks, persistently barred her road; I, whom she encountered after every murder; I, whose perspicacity she dreaded; I, who would never lay down my arms before I had discovered the culprit and found the letters stolen from the emperor.

"Well, the culprit should be Louis De Malreich—or rather, Léon Massier. Who was this Léon Massier? Did she know him before her marriage? Had she been in love with him? This is probable; but no doubt we shall never know. One thing is certain: She was struck by the resemblance in figure and stature which she might attain by dressing like him, in black clothes. She must have noticed the eccentric life led by that lonely man, his nocturnal expeditions, his manner of walking in the streets and of throwing any who might follow him off the scent.

"And it was in consequence of these observations and in anticipation of pos-

sible eventualities that she advised Mr. Kesselbach to erase the name of Dolores from the register of births and to replace it by the name of Louis, so that the initials might correspond with those of Léon Massier. The moment arrived at which she must act; and thereupon she concocted her plot.

"Léon lived in the Rue Delaizement. She ordered her accomplices to take up their quarters in the street that backed on to it. And she, herself, told me the address of Dominique, the head waiter, and put me on the track of the seven scoundrels, knowing perfectly well that, once on the track, I should follow it to the end—that is to say, beyond the seven scoundrels, till I caught their leader, the man who watched and commanded them, the man in black, Léon Massier, Louis De Malreich.

"And I caught Louis De Malreich. I found in his house the emperor's letters, *which she herself had placed there.* And I delivered him to justice, and revealed the secret communication between the two coach houses, *which she herself had caused to be made.* And I proved by means of documents, *which she herself had forged,* that Léon Massier had stolen the social status of Léon Massier, and that his real name was Louis De Malreich. And Louis De Malreich was sentenced to death.

"And Dolores De Malreich—victorious at last, safe from all suspicion once the culprit was discovered, released from her infamous and criminal past, her husband dead, her brother dead, her sister dead, her two maids dead, Steinweg dead, delivered by me from her accomplices, whom I handed over to Weber all packed up, delivered, lastly, from herself by me, who was sending the innocent man whom she had substituted for herself to the scaffold—Dolores De Malreich, triumphant, rich with the wealth of her millions and loved by Pierre Leduc, Dolores De Malreich would sit upon the throne of her native grand duchy. Ah!" cried Lupin, beside himself with excitement, "that man shall not die! I swear it as I live. He shall not die!"

"Look out, governor," said Octave, scared; "we are near the town now—the outskirts—the suburbs."

"What do I care?"

"But we shall topple over! And the pavement is greasy. We are skidding!"

"Never mind."

"Take care. Look ahead."

"What?"

"A street car at the turn."

"Let it stop!"

"Do slow down, governor!"

"Never!"

"But we have no room to pass!"

"We shall get through."

"We can't get—— Oh!"

A crash—outcries. The motor had run into the car, caromed against a fence, torn down ten yards of planking, and, lastly, smashed itself against the corner of a slope.

"Driver, are you disengaged?"

Lupin, lying flat on the grass of the slope, had hailed a taxicab.

He scrambled to his feet, gave a glance at his shattered car and the people crowding round to Octave's assistance, and jumped into the cab.

"Go to the ministry of the interior, on the Place Beauvau," he directed.

He settled himself in the taxi and continued:

"No, no, he shall not die! No, a thousand times no; I will not have that on my conscience! It is bad enough to have been tricked by a woman and to have fallen into the snare like a schoolboy. That will do! No more blunders for me! I have had that poor wretch arrested. I have had him sentenced to death. I have brought him to the foot of the scaffold—but he shall not mount it! Anything but that! If he mounts the scaffold, there will be nothing left for me but to put a bullet through my head!"

In a few minutes they were at the ministry of the interior. Lupin hurried across the courtyard and ran up the main staircase. The waiting room was full of people. He scribbled on a sheet of paper, "Prince Sernine," and, bustling a messenger into a corner, said:

"You know me, don't you? I'm

Lupin. I procured you this berth—a snug retreat for your old age, eh? Only you've got to show me in at once. There, take my name in to the premier. He will thank you, you may be sure of that, and so will I. But hurry, you fool! Valenglay is expecting me."

Ten seconds later, Valenglay himself put his head through the door of his room, and said:

"Show the prince in."

Lupin rushed into the room, slammed the door, and, interrupting the premier, said:

"No, no set phrases; you can't arrest me; it would mean ruining yourself and compromising the emperor. No, it's not a question of that. Look here. Malreich is innocent. I have discovered the real criminal. It's Dolores Kesselbach. She is dead. Her body is down there. I have undeniable proofs. There is no doubt possible. It was she——"

He stopped. Valenglay seemed not to understand.

"But, look here," cried Lupin; "we must save Malreich. Only think—a judicial error! An innocent man guillotined. Give your orders, say you have fresh information, anything you please; but, quick, there is no time to lose."

Valenglay looked at him attentively, then went to a table, took up a newspaper, and handed it to him, pointing at an article.

Lupin cast his eye at the headline, and read:

EXECUTION OF THE MONSTER.

Louis De Malreich underwent the death penalty this morning——

He read no more. Thunderstruck, crushed, he fell into the premier's chair with a moan of despair.

How long he remained in the chair he could not say. When he was outside again, he remembered a great silence, and then Valenglay bending over him and sprinkling water on his forehead. He remembered, above all, the premier's hushed voice whispering:

"Listen. You won't say anything about this, will you? Innocent, perhaps. I don't say not. But what is the use of revelations, of a scandal? A judicial error can have serious consequences. Is it worth while? A rehabilitation? For what purpose? He was not even sentenced under his own name. It is the name of Malreich which is held up to public execration—the name of the real criminal, as it happens."

And, pushing Lupin gradually toward the door, he said:

"Now go—go back there. Get rid of the corpse. And let not a trace remain—not the slightest trace of all this business. I can rely on you, can I not?"

And Lupin went back. He went back like a machine, because he had been told to do so and because he had no will of his own.

He waited for hours at the railway station. Mechanically he ate his dinner, took a ticket, and settled down in a compartment.

He slept badly. His brain was on fire between nightmares and half-waking intervals, in which he tried to make out why Malreich had not defended himself.

"He was a madman, surely. He must have known her formerly, and she poisoned his life, she drove him crazy. So he felt he might as well die. Why defend himself?" And he repeated persistently: "He was a madman. Massier was undoubtedly mad. Besides, all those Massiers—a family of madmen!"

He raved, mixing up names, with his enfeebled brain.

But, on alighting at Bruggen, in the cool, moist air of the morning, his consciousness revived. Things suddenly assumed a different aspect. And he exclaimed:

"Well, after all, it was his own look-out! He had only to protest. I accept no responsibility. It was he who committed suicide."

The necessity for action stimulated him afresh. Wounded, tortured by that crime of which he knew himself to be the author, despite all that he might say, he nevertheless looked to the future, and soliloquized aloud:

"Those are the accidents of war.

Don't let us think about it. Nothing is lost. On the contrary! Dolores was the stumblingblock, since Pierre Leduc loved her. Dolores is dead. Therefore Pierre Leduc belongs to me. And he shall marry Geneviève, as I have arranged! And he shall reign! And I shall be the master! And Europe, Europe is mine!"

He worked himself up, reassured, full of sudden confidence, and made feverish gestures as he walked along the road, fencing with an imaginary sword, the sword of the leader whose will is law, who commands and triumphs:

"Lupin, you shall be king! You shall be king, Arsène Lupin!"

He inquired in the village of Bruggen and heard that Pierre Leduc had lunched yesterday at the inn. Since then, he had not been seen.

"Didn't he sleep here?" asked Lupin.

"No."

"But where did he go after his lunch?"

"He took the road to the castle."

Lupin walked away in some surprise. After all, he had told the young man to lock the doors and not to return after the servants had gone.

He at once received a proof that Pierre had disobeyed him; the park gates were open.

He went in, hunted all over the castle, called out. No reply.

Suddenly, he thought of the chalet. Who could tell? Perhaps Pierre Leduc, worrying about the woman he loved, and driven by an intuition, had gone to look for her in that direction. And Dolores' corpse was there!

Greatly alarmed, Lupin began to run.

At first sight, there seemed to be no one in the chalet.

"Pierre! Pierre!" he cried.

Hearing no sound, he entered the front passage and the room which he had occupied.

He stopped short, rooted to the threshold.

Above Dolores' corpse hung Pierre Leduc, with a rope round his neck, dead.

Lupin refused to yield to a single gesture of despair or to utter a single violent word. After the cruel blows which fate had dealt him, after Dolores' crimes and deaths, after Massier's execution, after all those disturbances and catastrophes, he felt the absolute necessity of retaining all his self-command. If not, his brain would give way.

"Idiot!" he said, shaking his fist at Pierre Leduc. "You great idiot, couldn't you wait? In ten years, we should have had Alsace-Lorraine again!"

To relieve his mind, he sought for words to say, for attitudes; but his ideas escaped him, and his head seemed on the point of bursting.

"Oh, no, no!" he cried. "None of that, thank you! Lupin mad, too? No, old chap! Put a bullet through your head, if you like; and, when all is said, I don't see any other way out. But Lupin driveling, wheeled about in a bath chair? No! Style, old fellow, finish in style!"

He walked up and down, stamping his feet and lifting his knees very high, as certain actors do when feigning madness. And he said:

"Swagger, my lad, swagger! The eyes of the gods are upon you! Lift up your head! Pull in your stomach, hang it! Throw out your chest! Everything is breaking up around you. What do you care? It's the final disaster. I've played my last card. A kingdom in the gutter. I've lost Europe. The whole world ends in smoke. Well, and what of it? Laugh, laugh! Be Lupin, or you're in the soup. Come, laugh! Louder than that, louder, louder! That's right! How funny it all is! Dolores, a cigarette, old girl!"

He bent down with a grin, touched the dead woman's face, tottered for a second, and fell to the ground unconscious.

After lying for an hour, he came to himself and stood up. The fit of madness was over; and, master of himself, with relaxed nerves, serious and silent, he considered the position.

He felt that the time had come for the irrevocable decisions that involve a whole existence. His had been utterly shattered, in a few days, under the assault of unforeseen catastrophes, rushing to the attack, one after the other, at the very moment when he thought his triumph assured. What should he do? Begin again? Build everything up again? He had not the courage for it. What then?

The whole morning, he walked about the park, and gradually saw the position in a clearer light, with all the resolutions which it implied.

The midday angelus rang from the church steeple. He returned to the chalet, in a very calm frame of mind.

He went to his room, climbed on a stool, and cut the rope by which Pierre Leduc was hanging.

"You poor devil!" he said. "You were bound to end like that, with a hempen tie round your neck. Alas, you were not made for greatness. I ought to have foreseen that, and not hooked my fortune to a rhymester."

He felt in the young man's clothes, and found nothing. But, remembering Dolores' second pocketbook, he took it from the pocket where he had left it.

He gave a start of surprise. The pocketbook contained a bundle of letters whose appearance was familiar to him; and he at once recognized the different writings.

"The emperor's letters!" he muttered slowly. "The old chancellor's letters! The whole bundle which I myself found at Léon Massier's, and which I handed to Count Von Waldemar! How did it happen? Did she take them in her turn from that blockhead of a Waldemar? Why, no, the blockhead is myself. These are the real letters! She kept them to blackmail the emperor when the time came. And the others, the ones which I handed over, are copies, forged by herself, of course, or by an accomplice, and placed where she knew that I should find them. And I played her game for her, like a mug! By Jove, when women begin to interfere!"

There was only a piece of pasteboard left in the pocketbook, a photograph. He looked at it. It was his own.

"Two photographs—Massier and I—the two she loved best, no doubt; for she loved me. A strange love, built up of admiration for the adventurer that I am, for the man who, by himself, put away the seven scoundrels whom she had paid to break my head! A strange love! I felt it throbbing in her the other day, when I told her my great dream of omnipotence. Then, really, she had the idea of sacrificing Pierre Leduc and subjecting her dream to mine. If the incident of the mirror had not taken place, she would have been subdued. But she was afraid. I had my hand upon the truth. My death was necessary for her salvation, and she decided upon it accordingly."

He repeated several times pensively: "And yet she loved me! Yes, she loved me, as others have loved me, others to whom I brought ill luck also. Alas, all those who love me die! And this one died, too; strangled by my hand. What is the use of living?" he asked again, in a low voice. "What is the use of living? Is it not better to join them, all those women who have loved me, and who have died of their love?"

He laid the two corpses beside each other, covered them with the same sheet, sat down at a table, and wrote:

> I have triumphed over everything, and I am beaten. I have reached the goal, and I have fallen. Fate is too strong for me. And she whom I loved is no more. I die also. ARSENE LUPIN.

He sealed the letter, and slipped it into a bottle which he flung through the window, on the soft ground of a flower border.

Next, he made a great pile on the floor with old newspapers, straw, and shavings, which he brought from the kitchen. On the top of it he emptied a gallon of oil. Then he lit a candle and threw it among the shavings.

A flame at once arose, and other flames leaped forth, quick, glowing, crackling.

"Let's clear out," said Lupin. "The chalet is built of wood, it will all flare up like a match. And, by the time they

come from the village, break down the gates, and run to this end of the park, it will be too late. They will find ashes, the remains of two charred corpses, and, close at hand, my farewell letter, in a bottle. Good-by, Lupin! Bury me simply, good people, without superfluous state—a poor man's funeral—no flowers, no wreaths—just a humble cross and a plain epitaph: 'Here lies Arsène Lupin, adventurer.'"

He made for the park wall, climbed over it, and, turning round, saw the flames soaring up to the sky.

"Is that you?"

Madame Ernemont stood in her little sitting room in the villa at Garches, trembling, scared, and livid, staring at the apparition that faced her.

Lupin—it was Lupin.

"You!" she said. "You! But the papers said——"

He smiled sadly.

"Yes, I am dead."

"Well, then—well, then——" she said naïvely.

"You mean that, if I am dead, I have no business here. Believe me, I have serious reasons, Victoire."

"How you have changed!" she said, in a voice full of pity.

"A few little disappointments. However, that's over. Listen. Is Geneviève in?"

She flew out at him, in a sudden rage:

"You leave her alone, do you hear? Ah, this time I shall not let her out of my sight! She came back, white as a sheet, nervous; and the color has hardly yet returned to her cheeks. You shall leave her alone, I swear you shall."

He pressed his hand hard on the old woman's shoulder.

"I *will*—do you understand? I *will* speak to her. It is impossible that I should never see her again, it is impossible that I should not speak to her."

"She believes you dead."

"That is exactly what I do not want! I want her to know the truth. It is a torture to me to think that she looks upon me as one who is no more. Bring her to me, Victoire."

She was greatly moved and said:

"Listen. First of all, I want to know. It will depend upon what you intend to say to her. Be frank with me. What do you want with Geneviève?"

He said gravely:

"I want to say this: 'Geneviève, I promised your mother to give you wealth, power, a fairylike existence. And, on the day when I had attained my aim, I would have asked you for a little place, not very far from you. Rich and happy, you would have forgotten—yes, I am sure of it—you would have forgotten who I am, or rather who I was. Unfortunately, fate has been too strong for me. I bring you neither wealth nor power. And it is I, on the contrary, who have need of you. Geneviève, will you help me?'"

"To do what?" asked the old woman anxiously.

"To live. If not——"

"Oh!" she said. "Has it come to that, my poor boy?"

"Yes," he answered simply, without any affectation of sorrow, "yes, it has come to that. Three human beings are just dead, killed by me, killed by my hands. The burden of the memory is more than I can bear. I am alone. For the first time in my life, I need help. I have the right to ask that help of Geneviève. And her duty is to grant it to me."

The old woman was silent, quivering with emotion. Then she asked:

"What do you intend to do with her?"

"We shall go abroad. We will take you with us, if you like to come."

"But you forget—you forget——"

"What?"

"Your past."

"She will forget it, too. She will understand that I am no longer the man I was, that I do not wish to be."

"Then, really, what you wish is that she should share your life, the life of Lupin?"

"The life of the man that I shall be,

of the man who will work so that she may be happy, so that she may marry according to her inclination. We will settle down in some nook or other. We will struggle together, side by side. And you know what I am capable of."

She repeated slowly, with her eyes fixed on his:

"Then, really, you wish her to share Lupin's life?"

He hesitated a second, hardly a second, and declared plainly:

"Yes, yes, I wish it, I have the right to."

"You wish her to abandon all the children to whom she has devoted herself, all this life of work which she loves, and which is essential to her happiness?"

"Yes, I wish it; it is her duty."

The old woman opened the window and said:

"In that case, call her."

Geneviève was in the garden, sitting on a bench. Four little girls were crowding round her. Others were playing and running about.

He saw her face. He saw her grave, smiling eyes. She held a flower in her hand, and plucked the petals one by one, and gave explanations to the attentive and eager children. Then she asked them questions. And each answer was rewarded with a kiss.

Lupin looked at her long, with endless emotion and anguish. A whole leaven of unknown feelings fermented within him. He had a longing to press that pretty girl to his breast, to kiss her and tell her how he respected and loved her. He remembered the mother, who died in the little village of Aspremont, who died of grief.

"I told you to call her," said Victoire.

He sank into a chair and stammered:

"I can't. I can't do it. I have not the right to. It is impossible. Let her believe me dead. That is better."

He wept, his shoulders shaking with sobs, his whole being overwhelmed with despair, swollen with an affection that arose in him, like those backward flowers which die on the very day of their blossoming.

The old woman knelt down beside him, and, in a trembling voice, asked:

"She is your daughter, is she not?"

"Yes, she is my daughter."

"Oh, my poor boy!" she said, bursting into tears. "My poor boy!"

EPILOGUE.

"To horse!" said the emperor.

He corrected himself, on seeing the magnificent ass which they brought him.

"To donkey, rather! Waldemar, are you sure this animal is quiet to ride and drive?"

"I will answer for him as I would for myself, sire," declared the count.

"In that case, I feel safe," said the emperor, laughing. And, turning to the officers with him—"Gentlemen, to horse!"

The market place of the village of Capri was crowded with sight-seers, kept back by a line of Italian carabiniers, and, in the middle, all the donkeys of the place, which had been requisitioned to enable the emperor to go over that island of wonders.

"Waldemar," said the emperor, taking the head of the cavalcade, "what do we begin with?"

"With Tiberius' Villa, sire."

They rode under a gateway, and then followed a roughly paved path, rising gradually to the eastern promontory of the island.

The emperor laughed and enjoyed himself and good-humoredly chaffed the colossal Count Von Waldemar, whose feet touched the ground on either side of the unfortunate donkey borne down under his weight.

In three-quarters of an hour, they arrived at Tiberius' Leap, an enormous rock, a thousand feet high, from which the tyrant caused his victims to be hurled into the sea.

The emperor dismounted, walked up to the handrail, and took a glance at the abyss. Then he went on foot to the ruins of Tiberius' Villa, where he walked about among the crumbling halls and passages.

He stopped for a moment.

There was a glorious view of the

point of Sorrento and over the whole island of Capri. The glowing blue of the sea outlined the admirable curve of the bay; and cool perfumes mingled with the scent of the citron trees.

"The view is still finer, sire," said Waldemar, "at the hermit's little chapel at the summit."

"Let us go to it."

But the hermit himself descended along a steep path. He was an old man, with a hesitating gait and a bent back. He carried the book in which travelers usually write down their impressions.

He placed the book on a stone seat.

"What am I to write?" asked the emperor.

"Your name, sire, and the date of your visit, and anything you please."

The emperor took the pen which the hermit handed him, and bent down to write.

"Take care, sire, take care!"

Shouts of alarm, a great crash from the direction of the chapel. The emperor turned round. He saw a huge rock rolling down like a whirlwind upon him.

At the same moment, he was seized round the body by the hermit and flung to a distance of ten feet away.

The rock struck against the stone seat where the emperor had been standing a quarter of a second before, and smashed the seat into fragments. But for the hermit, the emperor would have been killed.

He gave him his hand, and said:

"Thank you."

The officers flocked round him.

"It's nothing, gentlemen. We have escaped with a fright, though it was a fine fright, I confess. But for this worthy man—— What is your name, my friend?"

The hermit had kept his head concealed in his hood. He pushed it back an inch or so, and, in a very low voice, so as to be heard by none but the emperor, he said:

"The name of a man, sire, who is very pleased that you have shaken him by the hand."

The emperor gave a start and stepped back; then at once controlled himself.

"Gentlemen," he said to the officers, "I will ask you to go up to the chapel. More rocks can break loose, and it would perhaps be wise to warn the authorities of the island. You will join me later. I want to thank this good man."

He walked away, accompanied by the hermit. When they were alone, he said:

"You! Why?"

"I had to speak to you, sire. If I had asked for an audience, would you have granted my request? I preferred to act directly, and I intended to make myself known while your imperial majesty was signing the book, when that stupid accident——"

"Well?" said the emperor.

"The letters which I gave Waldemar to hand to you, sire, are forgeries."

The emperor made a gesture of keen annoyance.

"Forgeries? Are you sure?"

"Absolutely sure, sire."

"Yet that Malreich——"

"Malreich was not the culprit."

"Then who was?"

"I must beg your imperial majesty to treat my answer as secret and confidential. The real culprit was Mrs. Kesselbach."

"Kesselbach's own wife?"

"Yes, sire. She is dead now. It was she who made, or caused to be made, the copies which are in your possession. She kept the real letters."

"But where are they?" exclaimed the emperor. "That is the important thing! They must be recovered at all costs! I attach the greatest value to those letters."

"Here they are, sire."

The emperor had a moment of stupefaction. He looked at Lupin, looked at the letters, then at Lupin again, and pocketed the bundle without examining it.

Clearly this man was once more puzzling him. Where did this scoundrel spring from, who, possessing so terrible a weapon, handed it over like that, generously, unconditionally? It would

have been so easy for him to keep them and to make such use of them as he pleased! No, he had given his promise, and he was keeping his word.

And the emperor thought of all the astounding things which that man had done.

"The papers announced that you were dead," he said.

"Yes, sire. In reality, I am dead. And the law of my country, glad to be rid of me, has buried the charred and unrecognizable remains of my body."

"Then you are free?"

"As I always have been."

"Then, nothing attaches you to anything?"

"Nothing, sire."

"In that case, enter my service. I offer you the command of my private police. I am the absolute master. You shall have full power, even over the other police."

"No, sire."

"Why not?"

"I am a Frenchman."

The emperor took a few steps up and down. Then he said:

"I should like to pay my debt, however. I knew that the negotiations for the grand duchy of Veldenz were broken off."

"Yes, sire. Pierre Leduc was an impostor. He is dead."

"What can I do for you? You have given me back those letters. You have saved my life. What can I do?"

"Nothing, sire."

"You insist upon my remaining your debtor?"

"Yes, sire.

The emperor gave a last glance at that strange man who set up in his presence for his equal. Then he bowed his head slightly and walked away without another word.

"Aha, majesty, I've caught you this time!" said Lupin, following him with his eyes. And, philosophically: "No doubt it's a poor revenge, and I would rather have recovered Alsace-Lorraine. But still——"

He interrupted himself, and stamped his foot on the ground.

"You confounded Lupin! Will you never change, will you always remain hateful and cynical to the last moment of your existence? Be serious, man! The time has come, now or never, to be serious!"

He climbed the path that leads to the chapel, and stopped at the place where the rock had broken loose.

He burst out laughing:

"It was a good piece of work, and his imperial majesty's officers did not know what to make of it. But how could they guess that I myself loosened that rock, that, at the last moment, I gave the decisive blow of the pickax and that the aforesaid rock rolled down the path which I had made between it and—an emperor whose life I was bent on saving?"

He entered the chapel, and, with a special key, opened the low door of a little sacristy. On a heap of straw lay a man, with his hand and legs bound and a gag in his mouth.

"Well, friend hermit," said Lupin, "it wasn't so very long, was it? Twenty-four hours at the most. But I have worked jolly hard on your behalf! Just think, you have saved the emperor's life! Yes, old chap. You are the man who saved the emperor's life. I have made your fortune, that's what I've done. They'll build a cathedral for you, and put up a statue to you when you're dead and gone. Here, take your things."

The hermit, nearly dead with hunger and not knowing what to say, staggered to his feet. Lupin quickly put on his own clothes, and said:

"Farewell, O worthy and venerable man. Forgive me for this little upset. And pray for me. I shall need it. Eternity is opening its gates wide to me. Farewell."

He stood for a few moments on the threshold of the chapel. It was the solemn moment at which one hesitates, in spite of everything, before the terrible end of things. But his resolution was irrevocable, and, without further reflection, he darted out, ran down the slope at a run, crossed the level ground of Tiberius' Leap, and put one leg over the handrail:

"Lupin, I give you three minutes for play acting. 'What's the good?' you will say. 'There is nobody here.' Well—and what about you? Can't you act your last farce for yourself? By Jove, the sight is worth it. Bravo, Lupin! Feel my heart, ladies and gentlemen. Seventy beats to the minute. And a smile on my lips. Bravo, Lupin! Well, are you ready? It's the last adventure, old fellow. No regrets? Regrets? What for, heavens above? My life was splendid. Ah, Dolores, Dolores, if you had not come into it, abominable monster that you were! And you, Malreich, why did you not speak? And you, Pierre Leduc! Here I am! My three dead friends, I am about to join you. Oh, Geneviève, my dear Geneviève! Have you done, you old play actor? Right you are! I'm coming."

He pulled his other leg over, looked down the abyss at the dark and motionless sea, and raised his head.

"Farewell, immortal and thrice-blessed nature! *Moriturus te salutat!* Farewell, all that is beautiful on earth! Farewell, splendor of things. Farewell, life!"

He flung kisses to space, to the sky, to the sun. Then, folding his arms, he took the leap.

Algiers. The barracks of the Foreign Legion. An adjutant sat smoking and reading his newspaper in a small, low-ceilinged room.

Near him, close to the window opening on the yard, two great devils of noncommissioned officers were jabbering in guttural French, mixed with German expressions.

The door opened. Some one entered. It was a slightly built man, of medium height, smartly dressed.

The adjutant rose, glared angrily at the intruder, and growled:

"I say, what on earth is the orderly up to? And you, sir, what do you want?"

"Service."

The two noncoms burst into a silly laugh. The man looked at them askance.

"In other words, you wish to enlist in the legion?"

"Yes, but on condition that I am not left moldering here. There is a company leaving for Morocco. I'll join that."

One of the noncoms gave a fresh chuckle.

"Look here, you," cried the man. "I don't stand being laughed at."

His voice sounded harsh and masterful.

The noncom, a giant, brutal-looking, retorted:

"You'd better be careful how you talk to me."

The man went up to him, took him round the waist, swung him over the ledge of the window, and pitched him into the yard.

Then he said to the other:

"Go away."

The other went away.

The man at once returned to the adjutant, and said:

"Lieutenant, pray be so good as to tell the major that Don Luis Perenna, a Spanish grandee and a Frenchman at heart, wishes to take service in the Foreign Legion. Go, friend."

The adjutant rose, looked at the astounding person with a bewildered eye, and went out in the tamest fashion.

Then Lupin lit a cigarette, and, sitting down in the adjutant's chair, said aloud:

"As the sea refused to have anything to say to me, or rather, as I, at the last moment, refused to have anything to say to the sea, we'll go and see if the bullets of the Moors are more compassionate. In any case, it will be a smarter finish. Face the enemy, Lupin, and all for France!"

THE END.

Emerson Hough's latest novel, "The Grapes of Wrath," will begin in the next issue of the "Popular," out two weeks hence, September 10th.

A Bulldog and Captain Olsen

By Albert Dorrington

Author of "Colonel Seal and His Perfumed Aces," "The Dragon-Smelter," Etc.

A schooner-bred dog that had arrogance as well as intelligence gets mixed in with the detectives. A little story of the brute creation that will make you bang the table with your fist and say: "Bully!"

VIEWED from the deserted wharf, she had the appearance of a convicted harbor thief. There was a certain piratical insolence about the storm-bruised figurehead suggestive of minor villainies or opium smuggling.

Jan Olsen, her skipper, was a walrus-headed Finn with wheat-red hair and a mystic eye. He was slow and ponderous in his movements, and lacked the silvery gifts of speech that mark the slim-handed fellows who deal in stolen cargoes. The rest of the crew answered to the names of Shnugg, Christensen, and Kempfler. The supercargo was an unpretentious bulldog named Bill.

Considered merely as a dog, Bill was of small account. There were plenty of better-looking animals to be had for a plug of tobacco or an old sheath knife. Bill was a sailorman's dog; he was wharf bred and salted in the ways of crimp-house masters and cheap gambling saloons.

The schooner was Bill's home. It had been his playhouse and his kennel since the day Olsen had brought him, a starved puppy, from the bleak windowless doss house down the river.

The schooner's ever-changing cooks were Bill's enemies. The fellow who worked off the mustard trick at his expense was too crudely familiar with schooner dogs to deserve much attention. The average "slushy" regarded Bill's presence on board as an affront and never lost an opportunity of working off some stale seagoing joke. At one time the humorist of the galley would wrap an ounce of cayenne in a piece of raw steak and cast it dreamfully in the direction of Bill's mouth.

The breath of Bill's scorn usually blew over such efforts, but if perchance the trick passed, the cook knew immediately afterward what Bill thought of a burnt under lip.

Generally speaking, the crew of Olsen's schooner had no idea of the tender sympathies lurking in the breast of the schooner-bred dog. Collectively and separately they fed Bill, until he lay like a toy dirigible at the galley door. And the only dish he rejected emphatically was Irish stew.

Carl Shnugg once tried, with a six-foot plank, to make Bill eat stew. Shnugg was convinced that Bill's outlook on the stew question savored of arrogance and warped intellect. He smote twice with the plank and paused meaningly to indicate a dish of neglected stew.

Bill got a grip on the plank end, and Shnugg bashed him thoughtlessly against the bulkhead.

"You veel eat dot petito und meat, Beel," he said confidentially. "You veel pe a goot dog, Beel, und eat——"

Bill shivered, then flattened his body against the plank until it resembled the butt end of a torpedo. Shnugg, the Finn, swung him dispassionately toward the cruel edge of a port stanchion, but the dog slithered down the plank and swung the heavy-footed berserk on top of a red-hot galley stove.

Thereafter the nutritive qualities of Irish stew remained unsolved so far as the schooner's bulldog was concerned.

The story of Bill's life would make an indifferent biography. While ashore it was a panorama of brilliant scrimmages and counter-attacks directed against the water police and their unprincipled hirelings who sought by fair and foul means to trap his master, Jan Olsen.

Bill's besetting sin lay in his hatred of the lazy ownerless canines who foregathered on the wharves and pier ends. He made hasty notes of the overgrown wolflike wastrels that put on airs whenever they came into collision with some half-trained welterweight terrier.

Bill rarely overlooked these hulking wharf bullies who stood stiff-eared and made insulting remarks whenever he happened to be engaged in watching a police tout. He arrived at them circuitously in his leisure moments, and the result of the interview was always the same—a short savage scuffle wherein a large, wolf-eared dog, of no particular nationality, was swiftly garroted and bumped violently on the footwalk. Bill always implied afterward that he could repair a broken footpath in three minutes, with anything under forty pounds.

At first schooner life did not agree with him. There were rats in the hold, and his face was too expansive to allow of burrowing or a smart kill; his neck was too short to permit of a lightning nip as they scampered over the battens into the forehold. But since the coming of Christensen's big red cat, life had taken on a pleasanter hue, and the rats had been taught to keep out of the storeroom and galley.

Business never slackened with Captain Olsen, even while in port. His drab-painted dinghy plied by night in the deep shadows of the bridges and pier steps. He borrowed skiffs and sailing boats whenever a careless owner allowed them to remain unguarded for a single night. A fresh coat of paint and a slight alteration in the rig made identification a purely speculative quality.

There were other opportunities for Jan Olsen besides the stealing of boats. The ports of Great Britain and America are the hunting grounds of cargo thieves and "spirit tappers." For several days the schooner had been under police surveillance. Portions of a steamer's cargo had gone astray mysteriously, together with three hogsheads of bonded liquors from the store near Kellerman's wharf.

Captain Jan Olsen was nowhere to be found.

The schooner creaked and whined at the pier side, as though trying to explain to Detective Callaghan, concealed in the shadow of some wheat bags, that she was a thoroughly respectable craft with a virgin horror of ill-doing. Callaghan had with him an experienced waterside tout named McFee.

Lying face down in the shadow of the wheat bags, Callaghan watched unceasingly the badly lit pier that stretched its narrow length past deserted pontoons and dredges to the edge of the flaring city. McFee squatted in the shelter of a coal truck prepared to grapple with the elusive Olsen the moment he crossed his line of sight.

" 'E can't sail without his schooner," McFee predicted from the truck. " 'E's dead sure to come aboard to-night. An' once his foot touches a plank he's ours."

The pier was practically deserted. Afar off the colored lights of the big ferry steamers flashed and rippled across the harbor. Detective Callaghan consulted his watch. Then, turning from the shadow of the wheat bags, his eye fell upon a plug-shaped object lying near the schooner's gangway. Walking over leisurely, he saw a bulldog squatting with his chin turned toward the city.

"It's Olsen's dog," whispered McFee. "Answers to the name of Bill. Good sort of a tyke in his way, but he's always playing off some little game in the interests of the schooner. Never takes a spell like other pups. Treat him like a hot firebar, Callaghan, an' he won't stick to your 'and."

"Good old Bill!" The detective

snapped his fingers and whistled ingratiatingly. One of Bill's small white ears twitched imperceptibly; he made no attempt, however, to welcome Callaghan's overtures.

"Where's the skipper, Bill?" whispered the detective. "Bring him out, old boy. We've got something nice for him."

The dog sat up suddenly and wagged his tail.

"Be careful of him," advised McFee from the rear. "'E's been bred an' born among thieves an' cutthroats. 'E'd sell his own father to keep that ginger-headed Olsen out of jail."

Detective Callaghan patted Bill's head a trifle doubtfully like one caressing an unknown temperament. "Seems to me that the brute is keeping watch over the gangway," he said aloud. "I've got a notion that Skipper Olsen is close at hand."

"Keep your eye on the dog, then," McFee responded. "See if he'll oblige with a little gratooitous information."

Bill looked into the detective's face, and then with a slight gasping of breath trotted down the pier toward the customs shed.

"By Jove, you never can tell!" chuckled Callaghan. "We're on a scent!" he called out to his companion. "Come along."

Both men followed the dog until it arrived at the big Salvation Army Hall situated within a cable's length of the pier. A band was playing inside, and from door to platform the place was thronged with sailors and port-side riff-raff, who usually foregathered there on Saturday nights.

Bill mounted the steps and paused in the open doorway to sniff inquiringly, while McFee and Calaghan ran their eyes over the heads and backs of the assembled gathering.

"Not 'ere, my friend, not 'ere," McFee admitted, after a careful scrutiny of each red head in the front and back seats. "Bill is misinformed."

The two men turned into the street thoughtfully.

Bill ambled down the steps, pausing an instant, with his face in the air. Then, as though changing his plans, trotted leisurely across the street.

"By crikey, the dog knows something!" Detective Callaghan turned eagerly across the road. "I've seen lots of dogs rounding up their owners on Saturday nights. Never struck me before. Derned good tip for the department. I'll make a note of it." He followed the bulldog guardedly.

Bill lingered a few moments outside a notorious whisky bar as though listening for the sound of a well-known voice within. Having satisfied himself that his beloved Jan was not at the bar, he started off in an opposite direction.

At the door of an old-clothes dealer's he was seen to halt and run in, sniffing loudly, with both paws scratching the counter. The Italian proprietor leaned over a pile of slop oilskins inquiringly.

"Halla, Beela! The capateen not here." The man's teeth flashed sympathetically at Bill's evident discomfiture. "You go 'long to Yacob Shipski's; you finda heem dar, I t'ink."

Bill made his way down an evil-smelling street that skirted the Chinese quarter of the city. A group of Baltic men lounged near the portals of a Norwegian boarding house. One bearded Northerner saluted the fast-running dog in a voice of suppressed thunder.

"Hi, yah, Beel! Vas dot you, Beel? Ah tank you vas gettin' fat as a leedle whale. Eh, you coom here, Beel."

Instantly a crowd of bull-throated men stooped to pat the dog's heaving sides. Bill ran among them acknowledging greetings here and there, his tail moving like a whiplash. Then, after pretending to bite the bearded colossus in the doorway, dashed inside the house.

A woman's loud voice broke out in welcome.

"Vy, Beel, vere haf you peen dese long viles, eh? I did hear from some ones dot Cap'n Olsen sold you to a Chinaman."

Bill emerged swiftly, a look of disgust in his eyes, and stood in a listening attitude near the curb.

"He's doing his dogged best at all events," the detective said quietly, as he watched Bill's motionless shape from a near alleyway. "I have always underrated bulldogs in the past because a scientific gasbag once told me that their brains were smaller than a collie's or an ordinary terrier's. I shall certainly mention this affair to the Criminal Investigation Department."

"'E's got brains, all right," assented McFee, with a grin. "But what's the next move, I wonder?"

Bill was standing quite still, a lone, sorrowful look on his face as though trying to recall some long-forgotten haunt once frequented by his master, Captain Olsen. Even the stroking hands of the hilarious Baltic men failed to rouse him from his attitude of silent dejection.

A sudden, half-heard exclamation flung from an unseen throat started him off at a fast gait down the lamplit street.

"We'd better follow." Detective Callaghan made swift gestures to his companion. "He's on the right scent this time."

"I don't like the shape of his ears," grunted McFee. "Never saw such ears on a tyke; he'd stop to listen if a fly crossed the street."

"Hurry on," panted the detective, "or we'll lose him in the crowd."

It was evident that Bill had been moved by a sudden inspiration. Swinging abruptly from the Chinese quarter, past the Sailors' Home and the German wharf, he halted in front of a low-roofed building that showed a faint glimmer through a small window.

"The morgue!" Detective Callaghan paused to wipe his brow. "This dog is getting on my nerves." He stared incredulously at the panting Bill, the pricked ears and slitlike eyes that appeared to follow the slightest hint in reference to the missing Olsen.

The door of the morgue was open, but the absence of anything living or dead within proved that the dog's instincts were astray. An air of dejection and fatigue came over the plug-shaped little animal. For several minutes it seemed as though he would lie down and have done with the business. Both men were now certain that Bill was in the habit of hunting Captain Olsen from certain haunts whenever the schooner was about to sail. Detective Callaghan stooped to caress his heaving sides.

"Good old chap! Where's he hiding, eh? We'll give him twelve months hard labor when we do find him."

"Don't let him 'ear you say that," protested McFee. "Bill's one of them dogs that takes it all in. He's got no end of instincts."

Bill shook himself lazily as though trying to overcome a desire to sleep in the secluded doorway of the morgue. Ambling down the street, his gait soon quickened to a sharp trot until the smoke and glare of the Chinese quarter were left behind. The unemployed dogs idling in the road gave him a wide berth as he passed. They knew him for a professional fighter who slammed himself at anything on four legs when roused to anger. Mere size in an opponent counted for nothing when Bill was in search of his master.

A brindled cur loped from a near byway and gazed meditatively at the small, flat-browed little dog that ran ahead of the two men. For an instant it looked as though a scrimmage were inevitable, and Detective Callaghan felt certain that all hope of finding Olsen would end the moment Bill tasted battle.

A stone, hurled with the precision of a gunshot, drove the brindled cur through an open gateway, howling dismally.

"I don't want Bill's personal equation disturbed," grunted the detective, with another glance at the gateway. "We must keep our bulldog cool and fresh."

"'E's fresh enough to fight a thrashin' machine," panted the other. "Bill knows when fightin' pays. You could light a theatre with his sagacity."

It seemed to them as though Bill would never stop running. McFee suggested hiring a cab and following more leisurely, but Callaghan thought otherwise. He reasoned out the possi-

bility of Bill vanishing down some dark side lane before they had time to alight from the conveyance.

The dog drew breath on the outskirts of the city in front of an iron-railed establishment half hidden from the road by a small avenue of close-planted trees.

A Stygian gloom enveloped the building. No sound of life or laughter came from the darkened windows. The dog looked into the detective's face quickly; then, walking to the corner of the road, was gone in a flash.

"'E's sold us by jingo!" McFee almost leaped across the road to where Bill's shadow had vanished a moment before.

No sign of the dog was visible.

Detective Callaghan stared dumbly at his companion as though scarce believing his senses.

"How have we been sold?" he inquired.

There was a certain innocence in his question that turned McFee's humor to gall.

"I sispected 'e was foolin' us all along. I warned you, Callaghan, on the pier, that he was a size too big in the 'ead for the pair of us." McFee indicated the dark building that stood back from the road.

"He's brought an' left us outside the Blind Asylum, the place for people without eyes like you an' me, Callaghan! If that ain't a clever trick, I'd like you to show me one."

Detective Callaghan fidgeted with his watch chain uneasily. "The tyke has merely bolted," he said at last. "Got tired of our company, perhaps. I don't see where the cleverness comes in."

McFee turned cityward with a brief shrug of his heavy shoulders. "If somebody told you that a fifty-cent dog had pulled the smartest detective in the country from his post of observation an' left him starin' at the wall of a blind asylum you'd think it was smart. If you aren't satisfied, Callaghan, that Bill is a common bunco I'll ask him to play the pianner next time we meet."

"The little beast!" Callaghan growled. "I can hardly believe that a dog could have been taught such a trick. We must keep all reference to the Blind Asylum out of our report, though. Some of the newspapers might refer to me as Callaghan the Pup Chaser."

"We'll keep the bulldog out of the report altogether," McFee responded darkly, "until we get Captain Olsen."

They hurried back to the pier, only to discover that the schooner had slipped away in the darkness, with Captain Jan Olsen on board.

SENATORIAL COURTESY

SENATOR HEYBURN, of Idaho, was concluding a fiery speech regarding the tariff. Senator Cummins, of Iowa, interjected a remark calculated to provoke a reply from Heyburn.

"Oh," said Senator Hale, of Maine, to Cummins in a tone audible throughout the Senate chamber, "don't stir him up again."

"I object to the remarks of the Senator from Maine," thundered Heyburn, very red of face. "He means to be insolent!"

"I do," agreed Hale smilingly, in the same audible tone. "I certainly do."

ALWAYS IN TRAINING

Edward A. Moseley, secretary of the Interstate Commerce Commission, is a trained boxer and keeps himself in fine physical condition all the time. A few weeks ago a man entered his office and insinuated that Moseley had lied to him. Moseley's reply was to knock down his visitor and then have the janitor restore the fallen gentleman by applying iced towels to his bruised and battered face.

The Vanished Man

By Ross Beeckman

Author of "The Tiger's Eye," "When the 'Strad' Turned Detective," Etc.

Being another parallel case. This one paralleled with one of the most remarkable crimes, and for a time the most puzzling and mysterious, ever committed in the history of New York City

"WELL, what did you find out, Mac?"

The chief swung his legs from the desk slide across which they had been resting, as Inspector McNaughton entered the room, and he manifested more interest in the simple question he asked than was usual with him. The reply to it was delivered in one word.

"Nothing," said the inspector.

Then, after a short pause, he added: "I took Savarin and Latrobe with me, as you suggested. We've been on the job two days now—and we know just as much about the disappearance of Amory Sylvester as we knew when we started out. We're up against a blank wall, as smooth and even as the surface of a billiard table. And that's all, chief."

"Tell me the particulars, Mac."

"There aren't any—that is, there aren't any more than you had in the beginning. Sylvester left the automobile, driven by his friend Bryce, at the corner of Edgemont Avenue and Percy Street. He started down Percy Street and crossed the bridge which spans Bridewell Ravine. It's an old-fashioned, wooden bridge fifty feet long, from end to end; to the bed of the rivulet under the bridge is a matter of fifteen feet. Immediately one crosses that bridge, one is upon the Sylvester estate, for Amory's father owns both sides of the highway for a distance of two miles. But you have heard all this before, chief."

"Go on. I want to hear it again, nevertheless. You have been on the ground, and I want the story from you, inspector."

"Well, a good part of the Sylvester estate is within our jurisdiction—within the boundaries of Greater New York, and the old judge made no bones of telling me that because of the fact he looked to us to clear up this mystery. He wanted me to tell you that he has more confidence in your ability to find his missing son, than in—— Well, you know the rest."

The chief nodded, sphinxlike.

"The young man actually disappeared while he was inside the city limits, as I understand it," he said. "Also, the Sylvester mansion and even the new house built for Amory Sylvester pay taxes to the city. The old judge is right, Mac. It is our case. Anyhow, we'll take it. Now give me your version of the disappearance."

"I haven't any 'version' about it, chief. Amory Sylvester left his friend's motor car at the corner. He crossed the bridge. He stopped for a moment in front of a cottage which stands twenty rods beyond the bridge, on the right. It is occupied by a former head gardener of the estate. Amory halted at the gate for a moment and spoke pleasantly with the old gardener and his daughter, who were seated on the porch. Then he went on toward his father's house, three-quarters of a mile distant. That was the last that was seen or known concerning him."

"Go on, go on, Mac. I want the

whole story again from you," the chief said, when the inspector paused.

"From the bridge, all the way to the gateposts which guard the entrance to the park where the mansion stands, there are woods—what I would call 'open woods,' on either side of the highway. I mean that the undergrowth is kept carefully cleared away, and only the old-growth trees—giants they are, too—are permitted to remain. One can see long distances through that forest park."

"It was still daylight when Amory disappeared, wasn't it, Mac?"

"Two hours before dark, at the least. The puzzling circumstances about the whole affair is the story the old gardener and his daughter tell, supported in its essential details by one of the Sylvester grooms. Ten minutes after Amory Sylvester passed the cottage and went on his way toward home, a groom drove past, going toward the avenue across the bridge. It was a part of that groom's duties to meet Amory at the trolley whenever the young millionaire returned from the city. But you see, this time, he had motored out in Norman Bryce's car, and so got there ahead of time.

"The old gardener thought it strange that the groom had not picked up his master on the road after passing the cottage, but concluded that the man had been sent on, to execute some errand—until he saw that the groom with the horse and road wagon was waiting, just this side of the bridge, while trolley after trolley passed. At last he went out and spoke to the groom—and discovered that the latter had not seen his master at all; that the man was, in reality, waiting for him.

"That's the whole story, chief. Amory Sylvester passed Upton's cottage at five minutes past five, going toward home, three-quarters of a mile distant; at fifteen minutes past five Slade, the groom, drove past it in the opposite direction, not having met his master or any other person on the road; at a quarter to six Slade drove back to the mansion, to find that his master had not arrived there; it all happened last Wednesday, and this is Saturday—and nothing has been seen or heard of Amory Sylvester since the moment he bade good evening to gardener Upton and his daughter."

The chief was silent for a time. Then, half to himself, half to the inspector, he said:

"Supposing the horse driven by Slade to have been merely jogging along, he would cover about five miles an hour; that would lead us to estimate that the groom drove through the park gateway, coming from the mansion, at about the same moment that Amory Sylvester parted with the gardener and his daughter. A man, walking leisurely, as he was doing, will cover, approximately, two miles an hour. The two were approaching each other. Is the highway straight, there, Mac?"

"No. It is like the outside rim of a crescent."

"How far along the highway could you see a person approaching you?"

"At a guess, I should say fifty rods."

"Fifty rods. That is almost one-fifth of the full distance to the park gate from the old bridge. Three-quarters of a mile is two hundred and forty rods."

"Yes."

"Now, let us go into mathematics for a moment. The groom, leaving the park gate at five minutes after five, would drive exactly half the distance to the bridge—one hundred and twenty rods—in four and a half minutes; and he would then have a view of the roadway fifty rods more ahead of him; that is, with his eyes he would have covered one hundred and seventy rods of the two hundred and forty. See?"

"Yes."

"On the other hand, Amory, walking at the rate of two miles an hour, would have covered in five minutes a distance that would have brought him within sight of the groom had he kept on. You say you can see fifty rods ahead of you along that road?"

"About that."

"How far along that road can you see from the porch of Upton's cottage?"

"Not to exceed a hundred feet, if as far as that. There are thick spruces close to the cottage, which shut off the view."

"Well, then, if the two had approached each other for three minutes, instead of five, the groom would have covered eighty rods; the master would have walked, approximately, thirty-two rods, and if we add to that sum the hundred rods range of vision—fifty for each—along the road, we get two hundred and twelve rods; and they would have been nearly thirty rods apart, so far as being able to see each other is concerned, at that time. If they had approached each other for four minutes, they would have been separated by sixty-three rods, actual distance, which would have brought them within sight of each other. I have figured this out, Mac, to establish the fact that Amory Sylvester must have disappeared within less than four minutes of the time he left Upton's cottage, and before he had walked much more than thirty rods."

The inspector nodded vigorously.

"I see the point," he said. "It is a good one, too."

"What is the general character of that roadway, directly after you pass the Upton cottage, Mac?"

"It's a wide, smooth, macadamized road, and is kept well oiled. The woods adjoin it on either side, as I have said. It is fenced off by stone, flat-topped walls of dry masonry; the walls are about four feet high. As I picture in my mind the immediate locality from which Amory Sylvester must have disappeared, I can imagine only two methods by which it could have been accomplished."

"What are they?"

"One is, that he was attacked by a person who was awaiting him for that purpose; by an enemy, a footpad, or a yeggman who might have leaped the stone wall and knocked him down with a stone or a club, and then dragged him over the wall."

"Yes; but the thug would have left him there, and he would have been found, Mac."

"Granted—unless Sylvester was actually killed; in which case the fellow might have carried the body deeper into the wood, and buried it, or covered it, to conceal the crime."

"What is the other theory?" asked the chief. "Is it that Amory Sylvester disappeared voluntarily?"

"Yes. Just that."

The chief nodded with emphasis.

"That is just about what happened, Mac," he said. "I decided that point in my own mind, from the start. But why did he do it? And how did he do it? Can you answer either of those questions?"

"The second one, perhaps. Not the first one."

"Let's have it."

"He knew, of course, that Slade was about due there to meet him. As soon as he was screened from view by the spruces beyond the Upton cottage, he could have leaped over one of the stone walls, and have remained there, hidden behind the wall, till Slade drove back again. Then he could have gone through the woods——"

"Yes; I know the rest. But it doesn't hold water—that theory; not as you define it. Listen to this. It is a copy of part of his *dossier*, taken from the record book: 'Amory Sylvester, son of ex-Justice Richard R. Sylvester; thirty-three years old'—I figured that from the date of his birth—'single; millionaire in his own right; heir to father's millions; student; artistic temperament; quiet, temperate, unostentatious, no bad habits; shuns women, save for family intimates.' That isn't all of it, but it's enough for our purposes. You see, Mac, the point I'm making is this: Thirty-three-year-old millionaires can't step off the earth as this one did, in a rural neighborhood like that one, even if it is in the city limits, without being seen and recognized by somebody. Every man, woman, and child in that locality knows about the disappearance. I will admit again that it looks like a voluntary leave-taking; and if it is—why, then Amory Sylvester is at this moment not a mile from the spot where he was last seen."

"Do you mean that he is at home in his father's house?"

"Either that or in his own house, which the judge built for him near by."

"But that house is leased—to a German professor from Heidelberg, under whom Amory once studied. The professor has occupied it the better part of a year; lives there with his wife and two German servants. He is some sort of a scientific crank; spends his time in a laboratory he has fitted up, studying pitchblend, uranium, and radium. I went there. I saw the professor and talked with him. He's a harmless old skate who lives in the clouds most of the time. I went through the house, too, top to bottom—from garret to cellar. Sylvester isn't there."

The chief left his chair and stood up, straight and tall, facing the inspector.

"Order my car for me, Mac," he said. "I'm going out there to see the judge, and to look the ground over for myself."

"Want me with you, chief?"

"No. I'll take Savarin. He knows the ground. You may be needed here before I return. Are you convinced that the old judge is an innocent party in this affair—that he knows nothing about this disappearance of his son?"

"Absolutely."

"Did you suggest to him the idea of a voluntary disappearance?"

"Yes, clearly; and I questioned him closely."

"How did he take it?"

"As being utterly absurd. It didn't even anger him."

"What other members of the family are there?"

"A maiden aunt—the judge's sister. She is even more distressed than the judge. She told me there was no reason and had never been one why Amory should absent himself from home in this manner."

"Huh! Mac, while I'm gone, call on Amory's bankers and dig up all you can find concerning his finances; and send Latrobe to me with the information. I may stay there a day or two. I'm convinced that, living or dead, Amory Sylvester is somewhere on that estate right now."

An hour and a half later the chief, with Savarin beside him, and a machinist on the rear seat, drove his car across the bridge and drew up before the Upton cottage. But he gathered no further information there, save that the old gardener and his daughter had immediately entered their cottage after Amory Sylvester bade them good night. They did not even notice whether he had passed beyond the spruces.

"So, for all you know, he might have turned about, and recrossed the bridge, after he said good-by to you?" the chief asked the young woman.

"He might have done so," was the reply. "But he started toward the mansion."

"Was he in the habit of pausing here to chat with you or your father?"

"No, sir. I think it was only the second time that he ever did such a thing. But Mr. Amory nearly always rides past here; he rarely walks; and he is usually so preoccupied that he scarcely ever notices anybody."

"Cold and distant, as a rule, eh?" asked the chief.

"No, sir; not that. Kindness itself when addressed; but preoccupied."

"Was there any particular reason why he paused here, that day? Did he have any special question to ask?"

"No, sir. He paused only long enough to pass the time of day. He did inquire about my father's rheumatism."

The chief walked along the road as far as the spruces. Then he mounted one of the stone walls, and, timing himself, walked four minutes along the top of it. Then he crossed the road and returned to his starting point by the other wall. After that he reëntered the car and drove straight to the Sylvester mansion. The judge received him with eagerness that was tempered with dignity.

"Judge," said the chief, when they were seated in the library together, "don't let me shock you, but I must speak bluntly. It is my belief that your son is hiding himself somewhere near here voluntarily. There is a possibility,

that he was murdered during the four minutes of time that was afforded for such an act, but it is extremely unlikely. If it was his desire to disappear, no matter what the reason therefor, he could have accomplished it by leaping the stone wall as soon as he passed the spruces, and by remaining concealed behind it until Slade drove past him on the way back here. Violence against him, by another, might have been accomplished in the same manner, but, as I have said before, that is so unlikely as to be almost absurd. Your son has voluntarily disappeared."

The old gentleman remained calm and unmoved while the chief was speaking, and he replied, with studied deliberation:

"I am accustomed, sir, to viewing all things judicially. My long experience on the bench is accountable for that. I have compelled myself to review this matter from that standpoint, putting aside my personal anxiety entirely. I assure you, sir, that throughout the history of my son's life I can recall no circumstance which might be assigned as a cause or as the beginning of a cause for such a desire on his part."

"Has there never been a woman in his life?" the chief asked.

"One; a cousin, twice removed—third cousin, you would call it. They were, or are, affianced. The wedding has been set down—if you will pardon a legal term—for the twelfth of next month, three weeks from the day of his disappearance."

The chief left his chair and crossed to a window. From there he asked:

"Where is the bride-to-be at the present time?"

"At her home in Cleveland, Ohio."

"Was it—is it—a love match?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Has your son ever occupied his own house—the one you built for him? I think I can see it yonder through the trees."

"No. He has never occupied it, and does not intend to do so. He has never liked it. It is leased now for a term of years to Professor Linderman, a former instructor of Amory's."

"I see. Have Amory and the professor been intimates, since the professor has lived here?"

"Quite so. Amory has passed a great deal of his time there—a great deal. The professor has called here only occasionally. He is a student, a man of science, almost a recluse. He dislikes strangers, and is barely civil to them."

"Do you ever call there, judge?"

"I have not been inside the house since Professor Linderman has occupied it. We—well, we are not congenial."

"I see. Nevertheless will you forego your dislike for the man long enough to call there with me now?"

"For what purpose? To what end?"

"I came here, judge, for one purpose only, and to accomplish but one end. Naturally every move I make has that object in view."

The judge slowly left his chair. The walk across the wide lawn and through the natural park was taken in silence. It was five o'clock as they mounted the granite steps, to find the professor's beautiful German wife seated there with a piece of embroidery on her lap.

As they approached her she arose and came forward to meet them, bidding them welcome in broken English. But the chief, from a distance, had seen the figure of a man disappear into the house as they drew near, and he knew that the professor had been seated there with his wife until he saw the two men coming. But whatever thought might have been suggested in the mind of the chief by that circumstance might well have been dispelled by Frau Linderman's first remark after the greeting.

"My husband has but now gone to his laboratory," she said, with her rather attractive German accent. "You will excuse him, gentlemen?"

"Pardon me, madam," the chief replied quickly, "but I came here purposely to talk with the professor, and I will be obliged to you if you will send for him. He is the only intimate friend that Amory Sylvester had—and I am the chief of police. Please send for your husband, madam."

It was a command, rather than a request. The woman looked up at him appealingly, though not affrightedly, and again the chief remarked silently upon her unusual beauty. There is no need to attempt a description; it would be utterly inadequate. She was beautiful—rarely beautiful, and evidently also possessed of unusual powers of intelligence. "The sort of woman for whom a man would go straight to hell—if she loved him," was the chief's thought.

But Frau Linderman did not at once comply with the request made to her. She stood quite still, irresolution in her attitude; but yet without the slightest sign of misgiving or fears. Her demeanor puzzled the chief, but he made no further remark concerning the purpose of his call. When the young woman did turn away, with a little, defiant toss of her head and an uplifting of her chin, he followed her through the entrance, signaling to the judge to remain outside.

"The solution of this mystery is with this woman," was his thought. "Her undeniable beauty, her qualities of fascination, and her extraordinary self-possession indicate that she is a remarkable woman and one of stupendous resourcefulness."

Frau Linderman did not discover the proximity of the chief until she was well inside the house and had reached out one hand to grasp the balustrade of the wide stairway. But he spoke to her then, and she turned, with a sharp intaking of her breath, to face him.

"Pardon me, madam," he said. "Before you go to your husband I would like to talk with you. Is this the library?" indicating an open door near them. "Let us go in here for a moment."

He waited for her to pass him, and then followed her through the doorway. He gestured toward a chair, but she ignored the suggestion and remained standing, facing him.

"Madam," he said, and he spoke almost without expression, "you know something about the disappearance of Amory Sylvester; I was already convinced of that, even before I saw you. Will you tell me frankly what you do know? Or must I use harsher methods than mere persuasion?"

She regarded him silently—half quizzically. Then she smiled at him, bewitchingly, and yet with defiance. When she replied the chief was astounded by her apparent frankness, and never had her beauty been more noticeable or her musical Hanoverian accent more attractive.

"You would threaten me, sir? There is no need," she said. "I do know something, which I will tell you. I have known for quite a time that Herr Sylvester meant to go away. When, or how, or by what means was his own affair. The marriage with the lady to whom he was betrothed was hateful to him; he chose to regard it as impossible—under the existing circumstances."

"What circumstances, madam?"

"He chose to regard himself as in love with another."

"And that other, madam, was——"

"You have guessed it, sir; she was, is now, the wife of his dearest friend."

The chief nodded. "Was your husband aware of this infatuation, as well as yourself?" he demanded bluntly.

"My husband knew of it before I did," she replied calmly. "Herr Sylvester told him. Afterward we discussed it together."

"The three of you?" the chief asked, more and more astounded.

"I have said that we discussed it together. Will it offend your sense of propriety, sir, if I admit that we talked of the possible return to Germany of the professor without me? That I was to remain here?"

"As the—what do you mean, madam?"

"As the wife of Herr Sylvester, when that event could be made possible."

"And in the meantime?"

"We did not discuss that; we need not discuss it now," she replied coldly. "Isn't it sufficient that I have confessed my love for him?"

"Quite so. Was the confession made to your husband also?"

"Certainly." She spoke quietly, calmly, and did not seem to regard the circumstance as an unusual one.

The chief was silent for a moment; then he said:

"Madam, are you aware of the suggestion your words convey to me?" She nodded an affirmative. The chief continued: "Professor Linderman is a man of science; he is engaged in experimenting with the most powerful agents known to science: Uranium, radium, curienium. When Amory Sylvester disappeared, whether it was voluntary or otherwise, he did not go to his own home; he was not seen again at all. Hence the logical deduction is that he came here. Madam, did your husband murder him, and are you endeavoring to conceal the crime? Where is the——"

She laughed outright, interrupting him.

"Professor Linderman would not kill a fly, unless it were in the interest of his scientific researches to do so," she said. "He cares nothing for me, save as an expert assistant in his studies. To Professor Linderman, I am as one of the glass jars that contain his precious compounds. To Amory Sylvester I was—nay, I am—the sun, moon, and stars, the firmament; and to me, he is all that, too. Do I speak extravagantly? Possibly; but I cannot make the statement too emphatic. Do you suppose, loving that man as I do and will, that I would be a party to his undoing, before or after the fact? Your logical deduction is superlatively illogical, sir."

There was not the slightest indication of trepidation about her. There was no suggestion of apprehension. She seemed conscious of no wrongdoing. If she had committed a crime, or had assisted at one, or even had guilty knowledge of such an act, she manifested nothing of it in manner or in speech. Quite the contrary, for her attitude was one of conscious innocence, even in view of the extraordinary confession she had made.

The chief was silent a moment; then abruptly he said:

"I will talk with the professor now, if you please. I will ask you to take me directly to him in his laboratory."

"Very well, sir," she replied, and moved quickly across the room, toward the door. There were two electric buttons in the wall beside it, and she pressed the lower one twice as she turned a smiling face toward the chief.

"Why did you do that?" he demanded, stepping nearer to the button and inspecting it with one quick glance.

"To inform the professor that we were about to visit him in his laboratory," she responded easily. "It angers him to be disturbed at his labors without warning."

"The button is a new one, madam. It has recently been adjusted."

"Yes," she said, and moved on through the doorway.

"Wait!" he commanded. "Since the disappearance of Amory Sylvester?"

"Later still, sir; since Inspector McNaughton came here and insisted upon searching the house from garret to cellar."

The entire frankness of her replies was the best weapon she could have used in her own and her husband's defense; and yet might she not be a consummate actress who pursued the policy of playing her cards face up on the table?

The chief followed her in silence to the top floor of the building. There, after she had tapped gently against a heavy deal door, it swung open to admit them, and the chief found himself in the professor's laboratory, facing the man of science.

Linderman was a tall, spare man, whose shoulders were so round and stooping that they gave him almost the appearance of being humpbacked. He wore huge, round, tortoise-shell-rimmed spectacles, with lenses so thick and strong that they magnified and emphasized his watery blue eyes. A close-fitting skullcap of black silk was pulled tightly down over his head, almost to the level of his profuse and shaggy brows; and spare, stringy locks of iron-gray hair dangled from beneath it to the collar of the threadbare, shiny coat he wore.

He looked the part of the student, the savant, to the tips of his long and slender fingers, one of which—the middle finger of the left hand—was disfigured, rather than adorned, by a plain gold ring of extraordinary width.

The chief comprehended all these details at a glance. There was no pause when he entered the room. He did not even wait for a formal introduction. The professor was scowling savagely, as if he were intensely annoyed by the interruption. The chief addressed him at once, and with unusual bluntness.

"Professor Linderman," he said, "unless you can give me satisfactory evidence that Amory Sylvester is now alive and well, and is also a free agent acting upon his own responsibility, I shall consider it my duty to take you to police headquarters—you and your wife—there to charge you both with his murder. I will give you just two minutes to answer me." He took out his watch, glanced at it, and waited.

"The *corpus delicti* is a necessary condition upon which to base a charge of murder, is it not?" the professor inquired calmly and without a change in his attitude.

"No. It may be necessary to secure a conviction; but not so in the making of a charge. Wasn't Amory Sylvester here, at this house, last Wednesday night, after the hour of his disappearance? Be careful how you answer me."

"Yes. He came here, through the woods, at six o'clock, or near that time. We gave him his dinner; then he went away, but I do not know where. I can give you no further information concerning him, for I have none." He talked in short, jerky half sentences, as if it were an effort to speak at all. The chief still waited, but when the woman would have spoken he silenced her.

"Let the professor do the talking," he said curtly.

"There was a reason for his going away," the professor went on. "He was in love with my wife. Doubtless that is why you would charge me with a crime. She confessed to me that she returned his affection. For a time I thought of giving her to him. But I could not spare her. She is invaluable to me in my work. I have entire confidence in her, sir; I wish you to believe that. We discussed the matter impassionately, the three of us. It was decided that he should go away for three years—the extent of my lease here. It was not mentioned that he should go in the manner he employed. My first notification of it was when he appeared here Wednesday night and told us of it. We attempted to dissuade him, anticipating trouble; but it was useless.

"He left here shortly after midnight. That is the extent of my information. You would charge me with animosity against him? Perhaps that is logical, but it is not true. I feel none; have felt none. I could not censure him for falling in love with Frau Linderman; but even the fact that she returned his affection has not lessened my confidence in her."

The chief restored the watch to his pocket.

"You are one of two things, Linderman," he said curtly, "a fool or a criminal. For the present I will adopt the latter term."

He crossed to a window, opened it, and whistled a signal. The professor and his wife withdrew to a corner of the room and conversed in low tones. The chief paid no attention to them, but waited quietly until Savarin appeared in the doorway.

"Savarin," he ordered, "remain here with these people until I return. I will walk home with the judge, and return with the car. Directly I leave the house, let the professor and his wife select a few necessary articles that they may need, but do not permit either of them out of your sight for a moment. You will take them to headquarters in the car."

The chief walked home with the judge, but said nothing of what had happened. The judge asked only one question that bore upon the matter in hand. It was:

"Have you discovered anything that will help to solve this mystery?" to which the chief replied: "Very little,

judge. I would prefer not to discuss it now."

When he rejoined Savarin he found him and the two prisoners waiting in the library. He spoke only to Savarin.

"You will have four prisoners," he said. "There are two German servants who must go also. You will sit between Linderman and his wife, on the rear seat, with the two servants directly in front of you. When you arrive at headquarters, tell the inspector that absolutely nothing is to be said or done, till I get there. Let the machinist drive the car. I will bring the two servants to the car for you. Now, go."

"Pardon me, sir," said the jerky voice of Linderman.

"Well?"

"May I ask if it is your purpose to remain here, and perhaps to search the premises during my absence?"

"It is quite possible."

"In that case I wish to warn you. In my laboratory there is great danger to an inexperienced person. You may be instantly killed, or burned to death, or suffocated. There is one jar in particular, the fumes and energy of whose contents will be instantly fatal if uncovered. There are others equally dangerous; so beware. I say nothing of my experiments of inestimable value, representing the labor of years, which you will ruin. I beg you, for your own sake, to exert the utmost caution while you are inside the laboratory."

The chief merely nodded. He made no reply. As Savarin conducted them from the room Frau Linderman added her quota to the warning.

"You will be in greater danger in Professor Linderman's laboratory than if a thousand assassins were sworn to take your life," she said.

Then they passed out, and a few moments later the automobile was driven away, leaving the chief a solitary occupant of the big stone house.

It was nearly dark then, and he went through it, snapping on the electric lights as he did so. During the night he made use of the telephone, with the result that before daylight, at four in the morning, three big cars were drawn up before the front entrance of the house, and into two of them were loaded many curious articles.

The building was darkened. The chief, with Savarin and Latrobe, who came out with the cars, entered the third one, and the three big machines rolled away toward the city. But the third car carried an extra passenger—Judge Sylvester.

"Mac," said the chief in his own office at headquarters two hours later, "there's a dead man in this case, after all, only there isn't enough left of him now to determine whether he was a man or an animal. But a man was killed in Linderman's house, with the connivance and assistance of the professor's wife. What is left of him is contained in those jars and inside of hollow receptacles which have been gouged out of those slabs of rock salt, covered with sheet lead that I brought here with me from Linderman's laboratory. Do you know anything about the action of radium, Mac?"

"No. I've read a little about it; that's all."

"Well, a pound of it would cost more than a million dollars. Also, a pound of it, unconfined, dropped into this room, would instantly consume us and everything else that is here, and presently the whole building. The only substances that will confine it are lead, platinum, and rock salt, the first and last of which were used in making these slabs.

"The awful energy of radium cannot penetrate it, and it is the only thing known to science which radium does not destroy; and by the word 'destroy' I mean annihilate, leaving no trace behind. There wasn't sufficient room for the body of the dead man and his belongings inside those five slabs of salt, no matter how it was cut and packed. Hence the use of the big jars, and the powerful acids, to begin the work of destruction.

"This is a case of murder first, butchery next, and total—that is, almost total—annihilation for the last act of the tragedy. If I had been twenty-four hours later in visiting that

house, there would not have been a trace of the crime remaining. As it is, there is mighty little; but there is enough. And, Mac, we've got to wring a confession out of that fellow downstairs."

"Or the woman?" suggested the inspector.

"The woman? She would never give up in a thousand years. Not she. Now, Mac, please do exactly as I direct. Get the big shower bath ready. Then walk Linderman into that room, under the shower, clothes and all, and turn on the full force of water. Have him held under it, too, five minutes. Then strip him; rub him down from head to heels, take that ring from his finger, give him dry clothing, and bring him here. If you encounter a surprise, don't get excited about it. That's all."

"What about the woman?"

"Let Savarin bring her here five minutes afterward."

The moment the inspector left the room, the chief ordered the jars and five slabs brought to it. Then he sent for Judge Sylvester, who was waiting in another room.

"Sit there, judge," he said. "I think I will have news for you presently." He refused to say more, and busied himself with his pen until there was a summons at the door. Then he left his chair and opened the door, throwing it widely ajar.

The man who appeared on the threshold, and who was thrust forward by Inspector McNaughton, was tall and spare, but otherwise he bore very little resemblance to Professor Linderman. He was smooth shaven, his hair was black, and closely cropped, he wore no glasses, and the hump on his shoulders had disappeared.

Judge Sylvester started to his feet, crying out:

"Amory! My son—my son! Thank Heaven——" He stopped. Amory Sylvester neither saw nor heard his father; he was staring at the jars and the five slabs; staring at them with bulging eyes.

The chief sprang suddenly forward. He seized the prisoner by the shoulder and jerked him roughly toward the jars and the slabs.

"There! Inside those hellish things is contained all that remains of your victim!" he exclaimed roughly. Then he whirled the prisoner around, facing the doorway. "And there," he shouted again, "is the woman who helped you to murder her husband, and afterward to consume his body with acids and radium!"

The ordeal was too severe. Amory Sylvester broke down under it and confessed, while the woman looked on and listened unmoved, save for the scorn she manifested for her lover.

Sylvester had been a pupil under Linderman in Germany. He had developed an abnormal aptitude for scientific chemistry. The violet ray and radium were his hobbies. Then he had fallen in love with the professor's wife, and she with him. Later he had succeeded in inducing Linderman to come to America to pursue his experiments.

The unhappy sequel of that has been told here.

The Americans

By Morgan Robertson

Author of "Down to the Sea," "Chicken," Etc.

The resourcefulness of young Ikey Shapiro astonishes his shipmates on board the bark *Salmon*, and there is a little surprise coming to himself when the voyage ends. The brief history of the "Americans" composing the crew will tickle you

THE little bark *Salmon*, her cargo stowed by stevedores and her canvas bent by riggers, lay at the dock with lines singled up, waiting only for her crew. The tug was alongside; Captain Johnson was in his cabin, eating a late breakfast served by his Japanese steward; the cook was in the galley, cooking a dinner for the expected men. Mr. Billings, first mate, and Mr. Seward, second, waited impatiently at the gangway for their coming; and as the bark lay bow-in they did not observe a slim figure that stepped over the quarter rail and disappeared in the lazarette. Soon the crew came in an express wagon with their dunnage and herders—two boarding-house runners—who drove them and bundled them, bag and baggage, over the rail amidships.

"Here we are, Mr. Billings," said one of these two cheerfully. "Good men and two-thirds American, as the law requires. Here are the articles."

He handed a large sheet of paper to the mate, who glanced at it, then at the crew. They certainly were a fine-looking, healthy lot of men, twelve in all, and he nodded approval.

"Pile your bags on the port side of the capstan, men," he said, "and as I read off your names, answer and step over to starboard. If any man didn't sign these articles, let him speak out. Now: John Jackson."

"Here, sir," answered an intelligent-looking fellow, shouldering his bag and stepping across the deck.

"American?" asked the mate.

"Born in Montreal, sir."

"You'll do," said the mate quickly, not anxious to press the question further.

"Michael McSorley," read the mate.

"Here, sorr," answered another, kicking his bag to starboard.

"No need of asking you," ventured Mr. Billings.

"Lars Larsen," he read again.

"I was here, sir," answered another, bag on shoulder. "I bane sail in American ships for——"

"Of course, you're an American. America is full of you. Pietro Parello, stand forth. You an American?"

A huge Italian went across the deck without replying to the query.

"Where were you born?" thundered the mate.

"I wasa born in Sorrento, Meester Mate, and I hava de nat—de natum—de paper, sir; I cannot speak de name."

"Right, but that will do. Herman Guggenheimer."

A German said: "Here I was, sir," and followed the qualified ones to starboard. "I serve by the American navy, sir, and it make me American."

"Don't let the Kaiser get hold of you," advised the mate. "William Arsdale."

"Here, sir," answered a burly, red-faced fellow, stepping over.

"You an American?" asked the mate.

"I'm an Englishman, sir, born in Liverpool; but I'm rather glad o' that, and as for being an American for purposes of shipping, why, to be an English-

man born and bred is much better, as America rightfully belongs——"

"Shut up!" roared the mate. "I'll soon show you the difference. François Allaire."

A Frenchman stepped over with his dunnage, answering politely.

"Where were you born?" asked the mate.

"In Paris, sir; but I have been ver' long in dees country, and I feel—— Oh, I feel"—he held his hand to his heart—"that I am one good American."

"Glad you're proud of it," grunted the mate. "Donald McCullough."

A rawboned Scot stiffened up, said: "Here, sir," but did not move.

"American?" queried the mate.

"I am not, sir; I am a Scotchman, born in Aberdeen, and I consider your quastion supairfluous in view o' the fact that I am an able seaman."

"That's right," said the mate, with a twinkle in his eye. "Get over to starboard."

Donald folowed, and the mate read off the next: "Alomano."

A brown-skinned, slightly built man answered: "Yes, sir," and stepped over. Anticipating the question, he said: "I am born in Honolulu, misser, and Honolulu is American soil."

"Good for you," chuckled the officer. "Ivan Petropskly."

A bearded man answered in good English, and stepped over.

"I was born in Russia, sir, and have never been naturalized. Yet I have sailed many years in American ships."

"All right," said the mate, glancing at the articles for the next name.

"George Washington," he read, and a huge, dark man answered:

"Here, sah," and quickly bore himself and belongings to starboard.

"No doubt that you're an American," said the mate.

"I consider maself an American, sah, as most all of ma race do in this heah hemisphere; but unfowtunately I was bawn in Jamaica."

"You'll be an American soon, then. John Smith," called the mate. "No doubt about this fellow," he added to Mr. Seward, for a tall, erect, copper-faced man with high cheek bones and straight, snaky, black hair, answered and stepped over. The mate laid the articles on the capstan head, and asked: "Where were you born? You seem to be the only real American in this crew."

"I was born in America, sir—just north of the United States boundary line. You'll find I know my work, sir; I sailed on the Lakes."

"The Lakes! Oh, thunder!" sighed the mate wearily; then, glancing at the articles, he called: "Cook, come out o' that galley. Sin Soon, come out o' that."

The smiling Celestial appeared, rubbing a pot.

"You're an American, too, aren't you?" asked the mate.

"Velly much Melican. Cook fore time chop suey lestlant in Pell Street. Cook chop suey, cook hash, dundy funk, duff—cook scouse, cook beans——"

"Crawl back into your hole," yelled the irate Mr. Billings. Then, looking around, he spied the Japanese steward in the cabin companion.

"Ito Matsumuto," he called, after another glance at the articles, "come here." And the Jap approached.

"You an American, too?" asked the mate.

"Yes. I do not hab taken out my papers, but I one time steward on the *Orcgon*, and I——"

"That's enough," growled Billings. "The skipper shipped you and the cook, and it's up to him. Get aft to your work, and you other Americans"—he turned to the crew—"take your bags into the forecastle and turn to. Bear a hand, now. And here, you; give me your receipt, and I'll sign it for twelve American sailors."

One of the runners produced another paper, which the mate signed, and then, while the runners took the articles and the receipt into the cabin to collect their "blood money," Mr. Billings and Mr. Seward went forward to hurry the men into their working clothes, which was soon accomplished. The tug went ahead, the lines were taken in,

and the little bark left the dock, bound down the bay for the open sea.

And before she reached the open sea the happy family in her forecastle was officially and effectually "turned to."

Captain Johnson had come on deck when the tug went ahead, and when the Narrows were passed he took the wheel—as is customary in small craft—and sent the helmsman forward to assist in making sail. It was now that the "turning to" began. Captain Johnson was a kindly faced, bearded man of forty, and his two mates were pleasant young men, a little younger than himself—all good fellows among their kind on shore, but devils incarnate at sea.

While the skipper looked on approvingly as he steered, men were cursed, kicked, and knocked down, at times with fists, but oftener with belaying pins. These three were bred on the doctrine of American deep-water seafaring—that sailors, like mules, could only be governed by fear. Having been so governed themselves at the beginning, they could believe in no other method. So, before the topgallant sails were set, every man of the twelve but one had been more or less maltreated.

The exception was Smith, the Indian, who, when McCullough was stretched prone upon the fore hatch, deliberately left his place at the foretopsail halyards, and going to the grindstone under the windlass, began sharpening his sheath knife. He was sternly called out, but did not come until the edge of his knife suited him. Then he appeared, trying the edge on his thumbnail and looking darkly at the two mates with a dangerous glitter in his eyes.

"My knife was dull, sir," he volunteered in a throaty, guttural tone, "and a sailor always needs a sharp knife."

"You'll get along without any, if you don't watch out," responded Mr. Billings. But he said no more, and no one noticed the slight paling of his face. But all noticed that Smith was not struck, while they were being taught their places. Once broken in, however, causeless brutality ceased, and by this time all sail was made, the tug dropped outside of the lightship, and the little bark was heading out into the Western ocean, bound for Hongkong.

Then Mr. Billings, his good humor restored with the successful upholding of his position, dragged out of the lazarette a slim, whispering creature in a good suit of clothes, whose hair was curly and parted in the middle, and whose nose was large, aquiline, and characteristic.

"Stowaway, hey? What d'you mean by it? Where'd you come from?"

The stowaway extended his hands, palms upward, and inclined his head to one side while he answered: "I vanted to get away for a time, mister. Der bolice were after me, but I done notting, mister, I done notting."

"You're one of the chosen people of the Lord, I take it. Which one of the ten tribes of Israel do you belong to?"

"I do not know, mister, but I was born in Hester Street, and I——"

"Hurray!" yelled the mate. "An American at last. Good. Get forward while I report your case to the skipper. On your way, now."

He collared the poor Hebrew and flung him into the alley. Then he kicked him forward and down the poop steps, and sought the captain.

Captain Johnson came up, looked him over as he stood disconsolately amidships, and said: "We can't turn back, nor waste time stopping an inbound ship. Put him to work, but he'll get no pay. Send him down, however, and I'll put him on the articles at a quarter a month for the passage. That'll give him a dollar in Hongkong."

So the name, "Isaac Shapiro," was added to the articles, and Isaac was bundled forward into the arms of the stricken and sore-headed crew, who gave him the worst and wettest bunk in the port forecastle, and laughed at his tale of the fire in his little clothing store that his father had placed him in; of the suspicions of the insurance people when he went to collect; and of his being warned in time by his friend, Aby Slumpsky, who worked in the insurance office.

Isaac was only eighteen, but the burden of the battle of life was heavy upon him. He could not readily adjust himself to the ways of the sea, and complained bitterly at being called from sleep when eight bells rang. He could not go to sleep in the day watches below, and kept his watchmates awake with descriptions of his aches and pains; his little clothing store that an enemy had set fire to; the inhuman attitude of the insurance company; and the hard fate that had sent him out upon the ocean, bound he knew not where.

On deck his work was scrubbing, scouring, and sweeping, overseen by an unkind first mate who called him names, until he learned—in spite of himself—the sails and some of the ropes, and to take the wheel in fine weather, while the more sailorly incumbent worked in the rigging.

As his usefulness increased, his ill-treatment decreased, so that by the time the ship had rounded the Cape of Good Hope, Ikey, as they called him, was in good standing with the crew; and the crew, fully disciplined and impressed, were in good standing with the afterguard, which, however, in its three units, stood ready to forcibly correct an unwise sailor who should so far forget the etiquette of the sea as to pass to windward of an officer, or omit the "Mr." and the "sir" when addressing one.

Ikey learned this lesson early—about the time that he learned the compass—and never transgressed again. He even "mistered" his shipmates, who, when they had found out that no amount of punishment could thoroughly silence his voice, tried the other tack, and when not too tired and irritated by fatigue or loss of sleep, joked with him good-naturedly. And Ikey, under the influence of kindness, became companionable and entertaining.

He could furnish little of the latter, and that in his only specialty; he was a business man, a graduate of the grammar school and a commercial college, and he was a splendid arithmetician. He learned the probable length of the voyage, and calculated the pay due each man at the end, comparing the result mournfully with his own hard-won stipend.

And so, with the "sweet little cherub" perched upon the main truck, and the Angel of Peace hovering above, the bark sailed into the northern fringe of a cold Antarctic storm, the centre of which was coming north; and here came events that sent the Angel of Peace to leeward, but gave the cherub a tighter grip on his perch—to "look out for the fate of poor Jack."

It was a fair wind, and Captain Johnson, hoping to escape the deadly storm centre, crowded on sail instead of taking it off, and with every spar bending, and rigging singing like fiddle strings, the little craft charged on, sliding down long slopes of half a mile length to becalm her topsails in the trough; then rising slowly as the sea passed on, to have them nearly whipped out from the sudden contact with the blast.

Steering was difficult, even with two men at the wheel, and to make it easier Captain Johnson clewed up and furled the mainsail and cro'-jack.

This helped the steering, but brought a heavy strain upon the foresail—a good sail to scud under, but in this case old and weak. To save it from blowing away he decided to reef it, and to this end coils of running gear were thrown to the deck, and buntlines, clew garnets, and leachlines were cast off the pins in readiness.

Here was where the Angel of Peace took flight. Ikey, mistaking the foretopgalant sheet for a buntline, a rope of the same size and belayed on the next pin, cast it off, and in a minute the topgallantsail was in ribbons.

Loudly swore the skipper and mates, and roundly and soundly they hammered poor Ikey, until he nearly lost his senses. And when the crew—all hands on such a job—had sent aloft and bent a new topgallantsail in that howling gale, and had come down, they further added to his punishment.

At the end they lifted him into his bunk, too full of sprains, broken small

bones, and contusions to be of use. Then they were sorry; for Ikey had made but a very usual and common mistake, as ships are rigged; but for the first time on board Ikey's tongue was silent. He was too sore and enraged to speak.

But they charged on, with the wind increasing and the barometer falling; and at last when it had become a dangerous manœuvre Captain Johnson decided to heave to—that is, put the craft to the wind.

As the storm centre was surely overtaking him, he chose the port tack, in order to drift away from it. Everything was furled but the topsails, spanker, and foretopmast staysail, and the yards braced to starboard.

Then, before putting the wheel down, Captain Johnson called his two mates aft to give them specific instructions, as the crashing of seas and the increased noise of the wind while headway was stopped might prevent orders from being heard.

But headway was already lessened, by the shortening down and the bracing of the yards, and no sooner were the three together on the starboard quarter than a huge hill of water lifted up, crashed over the stern, and pinned the two helmsmen against the wheel, luckily amidships, so that it did not spin, and kill them.

But the sea produced other results. The three men on the quarter were engulfed by the small Niagara which seemed to beat the stern of the bark down; then they were lifted high above the quarter rail, high above the house and its monkey rail, and over the side. The ship was making twelve knots, and before the helmsmen were able to sing out, and the half-drowned men forward able to comprehend, they were half a mile astern.

They were clad in tightly buttoned oilskin coats and hip rubber boots; every boat on board was upside down on the forward house, and there was not a life buoy on deck. The bark went on, before the wind, until the crew, under the influence of the master spirits, Jackson, Arsdale, McSorley, and others, and spurred by other big hills that climbed on board, watched for the last of three big seas, and put the wheel down.

The bark struggled a while in the trough, then came slowly to the wind, and rode the seas well. Then the watch went below, and at eight bells the other watch went down, and when both sides were rested there was a powwow in the port forecastle, to which the steward and cook were invited, and in which all had their say—but to the same conclusion: Not a man on board knew where they were or had the faintest inkling of navigation.

"Then it's up to you, Ikey, me boy," said McSorley. "Can you study navigation from the skipper's books an' git this ballyhoo into port?"

"I can, but I won't," snarled Ikey, sitting up and glaring at them. "Lo-ufers what you are. Lo-ufers, I say. You hit me, you kick me, when I do notting."

"Oh, that's all right, Ikey," said Arsdale soothingly, "we didn't mean to hurt you—not a bit. But you let go the t'gallant sheet when you shouldn't, don't you know, and made us lots o' work, you know."

"Navigate yourselups; I haff notings to do with you. I wish I was dead, or back in mine store, where I call a boliceman when you hit me."

"I t'ink, if you will permit me," said Frenchman Allaire, "zat it will be bettaire if I talk to heem politely. You men are—ah—somewhat sudden in your conversation. I will speak to him. Ikey——"

"Shut up," said Ikey. "I want none of your politeness. I stay in my bunk, and when I get home I haff the law on you. On you all, I will."

"I think you's de mos' onreasonable man I ever seen in all my bawn days," said Washington. "Heah you is, de only eddicated man in dis heah crew, and we offer to make you captain of dis ship, and you refuse."

"I don't want to be captain. Go 'way with you all."

"Give him another bat on the nose," suggested McSorley.

"Pool him dot bunk oudt," said Guggenhiemer. "His watch on deck it iss."

"Na, na," said McCullough. "Dinna ye see that the man's only in a temper, and he'll listen to reason whin he comes round?"

"And the ship driftin' Hell knows where," said Jackson. "Get him out o' that and drive him aft."

"You will not drag me out," shrieked Ikey. "I stay mineselup right here in mine bunk where you put me."

"I once heard a skipper say," said Petropskly, in his pure diction, "that any schoolboy could master navigation in three months. Surely this man can learn enough to lay out a course in a few days. I would attempt it, only that I cannot read English, much less understand figures."

"Get out o' thot bunk, ye hook-nosed —— Raus mit him—— Be reasonable, mon, be reasonable—— Ay, me lad, we'll use force upon you—— Get a rope's end, and hook on—— Get chain hooks—— Wait, wait, politeness is best, politeness—— Shut up, Frenchy—— I think minseluf proud to be made cappen——" and they all joined in, even Sin Soon, the cook, adding his contribution to the polyglot protest. And over the uproar rose high and shrill Ikey's defiance and disdainful refusal. Never was so modest a candidate in the face of certain election.

But it was McCullough who diplomatically quelled the riot and brought back the Angel of Peace overhead.

"Wait," he said, when he could be heard. "We're forgettin', I think, the main incentive to labor in any capacity, remuneration. Ikey, we're willin' to reimburse you for your trouble."

"What?" answered Ikey, the frown vanishing from his brow, and the glare from his eyes. "Pay me? You pay me? How much?"

"A reasonable amount out of our pay, of course. The consul of the nearest port will settle it."

"No-ah. Oh, no-ah," said Ikey, laying back in his bunk. "You want me to study navigation. Very well, I make mine own terms mine sellup."

"And fwat are yer terms?" asked McSorley, his brogue increased by his excitement.

"All der money what you all earn until we get to port."

"You dommed inhuman robber and thief," stormed McCullough, his sympathies turning at the outrageous demand. Again the uproar began, and through it all Ikey remained quiet and recumbent, until the last voice had spoken.

"I haff told you my terms," he said with what dignity he could assume while horizontal. "You can accept or refuse, as you blease."

"Come out on deck, boys," said McSorley. "We'll talk it over out o' reach of his long ears."

Out they trooped, and McSorley reminded them, first, that they had already drawn three months' advance money, and that the nearest port could be reached before the three months were up; second, that under the circumstances it was best to accept, even though they lost every cent lawfully, as they had expected to be "worked out" in Hongkong, anyway.

"Working out," be it explained, is so ill-treating a crew on arrival in a foreign port that they will desert to escape it, thus forfeiting by law all wages due and clothing left behind.

Mike's argument was logical, and they all voted in the affirmative, also in the affirmative upon an amendment proposed by McCullough—that in lieu of the extra month's pay which they expected to lose they would draw from the skipper's slop chest, and supply themselves with clothes. Whereupon the cherub aloft slid down to the royal yard for a firmer grip, for his job was reaching its limitations.

They filed in, and apprised Ikey of their decision, and he painfully climbed out and went aft, saying that he would see what he could do. He appeared in an hour and announced that navigation, as concerned the plotting of a course, the taking of the sun for latitude, and the taking of sights for chronometer time, were well within his powers, provided that he had a few days for study.

They gave him time, and without electing mates they busied themselves for a couple of days in watching the ship and making sail as the wind went down. Then Ikey appeared, announced that he had the ship's position by approximate drift from the last entry in the log; that he had figured the course east on the fortieth parallel, and that he was ready to begin when they had signed the agreement, which he read to them.

It was a long, comprehensive, and iron-clad document, to the effect that every last cent of every man's pay while the passage lasted to a safe consular port should fall due to Isaac Shapiro in return for his services as navigator and captain.

They cheerfully signed their names, even the Asiatic steward and cook, who had drawn no advance and had no fear of being worked out. But McSorley's fists were hard and their ribs tender, while the objurgations of the rest were deafening and pursuasive. So, about eighteen hundred dollars of wages were signed away.

Thus fortified, Ikey chose, on the advice of all, McCullough and MeSorley first and second mate, and began his duties as student and navigator, while his mates, better sailors, handled the bark and accepted the courses given them.

Ikey did well, but there was nothing remarkable in his so doing. Navigation is applied science, and has been so simplified for its study by unlettered men of the sea, that—as the Russian had quoted—it can be mastered in all its details in three months. A keen, shrewd, and quick-witted mathematician like Ikey needed less time.

The skies were no sooner clear than he was taking the sun at midday, and in a week had instructed McCullough in taking morning sights for longitude, also intrusting to him the keeping of the log book, much to the disgruntlement of his fellow officer McSorley, who remarked in the hearing of Donald that it "wuz sympathy of race—that the Scotch were descended from the two lost tribes of Israel, and that wuz why a Jew couldn't make a livin' in Scotland." McCullough won in the little friction that followed, and after that the second mate was more careful in his remarks.

As agreed upon, they drew clothes from the skipper's slop chest, and forgot to turn in an account to Ikey; then, having formed the habit, they looted it, and threw away their old clothes to make room for the new in their bags; whereupon the cherub up aloft quit his job, and Ikey, keenly observant—for he had secretly clad himself—entered their offense in the official log, the use and value of which he had learned.

But the Angel of Peace held on, and the little bark sailed smoothly on across the Indian Ocean, Ikey making a good landfall of St. Paul's Island and then hauling to the northward, not for Java Head and the Straits of Sunda, where the tide ran only one way and winds were light and variable, but for Malacca Pass at the head of Sumatra, from which he could sail down the Malacca Strait without interference from consuls, and the shortening of his service and its emoluments.

He successfully achieved the difficult feat, declining a Strait pilot, and passing Singapore into the China Sea without molestation. Success made him confident and at times authoritative. He grew stouter on the good fare of the cabin—some of which was served in the forecastle, however—bore himself well, and declined all but official conversation with the rest.

And so, with clear sailing up the China Sea, and good weather to aid him, he took a pilot off Hongkong, and paced the top of the cabin in the most approved captainish manner, while the bark went in and his former masters hauled, and pushed, and panted at furling sail and getting anchors ready.

Donald and Mike moored the bark, as this manœuvre cannot be learned from books; then Ikey, hailing a sampan, went ashore with the ship's papers—for so far had his nautical education progressed—and reported at the customhouse. Then he hied himself to the American consul. And in his

pocket was the official log and the signed forfeiture of pay. He found the consul a rather bluff and direct individual, who quickly scanned the log and the agreement, and listened to his story.

"Got the articles with you?" he asked, and Ikey produced them. The consul glanced at the heading, read the names, and laid them down.

"Now, as I understand," he said, "you, as acting captain, want these men punished for robbing the slop chest."

"Of course," said Ikey, shrugging his shoulders. "They robbed the dead captain of his clothing, and they ought to go by the jail, I say. A man who will rob a clothing store will do murder. He should be in jail for life."

"Possibly," said the consul dryly. "We'll have to figure out how much they got. The punishment is forfeiture out of their pay of an amount equal to the amount of the theft, and also a possible year's sentence to jail."

"But a year is not enough," protested Ikey. "They hit me, they kick me, they call me names, so hellup me. And besides, they have no money coming to them. They signed it all over to me if I navigate. I had to study, and I did navigate. All the money what they haff earned comes to me, for there is the agreement, signed—signed by all, over eighteen hundred dollars I have earned."

The consul picked up the articles, and looked at the names. His face puckered.

"I see," said he, "that this ship sailed from New York on December twenty-sixth of last year—that is, eighteen ninety-eight, and two or three days after the enactment of the new Seamen's Law, which prohibits a three months' advance to sailors and allows for only a month's allotment to a favored creditor before sailing. If these articles stand—though I don't see how or why the shipping commissioner put them through, the men are only entitled to about a month's pay, and if the agreement stands, that's all you'll get after they pay up the slop-chest account."

Then Ikey swore. "Only one month they get!" he exclaimed. "I am ruined."

"Perhaps you are," said the consul. "Perhaps all you'll get is the twenty-five cents a month you signed for. Now keep still while I read up a little."

He consulted his law books, and soon found what he sought.

"Listen," he said. "I'll read what bears upon this case. Forty-five, thirty-six of the Revised Statutes says this:

"Every payment of wages to a seaman or apprentice shall be valid in law, notwithstanding any previous sale or assignment of wages, or of any attachment, incumbrance, or arrestment thereon; and no assignment or sale of wages or of salvage made prior to the accruing thereof shall bind the party making the same."

"Captain Shapiro," he concluded, emphasizing the prefix, "the men have been paid three months' advance, and have got it. It can't be taken away from them. They have about a month's pay, and this will about pay for the clothes. Did you take any clothes?"

"I took this suit," answered the dazed Ikey. "I was ragged, and I was captain, and I——"

"That's enough. I'll take charge of the bark *Salmon,* pending cable advices from the owners, and you'd better find a job and add something to that dollar due you, or I'll put you in jail for a year—that is, if I catch you."

"And the men!" screamed Ikey. "The men that hit me and kick me!"

"I'll send a marshal out and arrest the lot for breaking into ship's stores."

"And I get notting—notting."

"Yes, jail, if I catch you around here again."

A groan of anguish broke forth from Ikey, and he departed, waving his hands above his head. He was not arrested, because the consul did not see him again. Nor were the men arrested; when the marshal boarded the bark *Salmon,* she was empty of all but the cook and steward, who proved their innocence by showing well-filled trunks of clothing other than slops.

And again on the main royal truck was the cherub, and high over all soared the Angel of Peace.

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